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I. Introduction

After getting the Independence the Republic of Uzbekistan has worked out an own model of development, taking into account the specific social and political traditions in the country. One of the most important conditions for the development of any country is a well functioning education system. As the education system ensures the formation of a highly developed that must be able to live in a highly, with social and personal activity, ability to function independently in the public and political life.

By 1997 on the basis of the National Model of development there had been worked out the national program for Personal Training which defined conceptual ways and concrete details, mechanisms for radical reforming the education system and personnel training.

The program is the normative scientific basis for reforms. Starting from 1997 it is being put into practice stage by stage. The document paves the way for radical reforms in the structure and content of the National Program we need to change some ways of teaching the English language under school conditions as the old approaches no longer meet the requirements of the last year. The historic changes took place in Uzbekistan, since there have been obtained. Independence and sovereignty after September 1991, in Independent Uzbekistan many political economical cultural and social factors have changed. Therefore, the very time of getting Independence the head of the republic I.A.Karimov attended to change Educational system and the attempts reflected on changing in Educational system in 1997, the Educational system and personnel Training so high developed before Independence no longer meets requirements of democratic and market changes occurred in the Republic today.

It should be noted that the National Program of Personnel training had some unique features. The reforms are carried out on a extensive scale are supported scientifically.

As the President I.A.Karimov emphasized in his book “Uzbekistan along the road of Independence and progress”¹. There are four path of reform and development is based:

- Adherence to universal human values
- Consolidation and development of the nation’s spiritual heritage.
- Freedom for the individuals realization.
- Patriotism.

The highest objective of reformation in Uzbekistan is to revive those traditions, fill them with new content and set up all necessary conditions achieving peace and democracy, prosperity, cultural advancement freedom of conscience and intellectual maturity for every person on each.

According to the requirement on the National Program of Personnel training and reforming of highest education in the republic of Uzbekistan it is important to make effective changes in the system of Higher Education.

As Karimov I.A. highlighted “Our young generation must be quick-cutter, wiser, healthier and of course, must be happier than us”².

In order to achieve “Harmoniously developed generation”³ Educators should use all the suitable aids.

The contribution of the individual student to the learning process

In this research work we consider the part the individual learner plays in the learning process. We start by examining some of the recent work in the area of individual differences in language learning, and point out a number of problems with research that has been carried out in this field. We suggest that an alternative approach to this topic would be a constructivist one, focussing on how individual learners make sense of their learning situations in ways that are personal to them. We then propose three areas that could fruitfully be

¹ I.A.Karimov. Uzbekistan along the road of Independence and progress. Tashkent 1993, p. 67.

² I.A.Karimov. There is no future without history. Tashkent 1997, p. 47.

³ I.A.Karimov. Harmoniously developed generation is a basis of progress of Uzbekistan. Tashkent 1998.

explored in order to reach a better understanding of individuals; self-concept, locus of control and attribution theory.

A great deal has been written in language teaching books and journals about the importance of considering individual differences in learning a foreign language. In a comprehensive review of the literature on this topic, Oxford and Ehrman (1993)⁴ Suggest that teachers of a second language need to identify and comprehend significant individual differences in their learners if they are to provide the most effective instruction possible. In many respects this statement reflects commonly accepted wisdom within the language teaching world. Few textbooks on language learning would claim to be comprehensive without reference to this area (see, for example, Ellis 1994; Brown 1994; Lightbown and Spada 1993), and some have even devoted whole books to it (Galbraith and Gardner 1988; Skehan 1989)⁵.

It is undoubtedly true that learners bring many individual characteristics to the learning process which will affect both the way in which they learn and the outcomes of that process. However, just what those characteristics are and exactly how they affect the learning process is much more unclear. A moment's thought will probably bring to mind such apparently obvious examples as age, gender, personality, aptitude, intelligence and motivation as characteristics influencing our success in learning a foreign language. Other less obvious but widely researched characteristics relating to language learning have been cognitive styles and strategies, anxiety and preparedness to take risks.

In fact, the very term *individual differences* has been taken from psychology, where an even more vast literature exists on the topic. However, we would argue that there are a number of problems with the approach that has often been taken to work in this area in terms of the selection of particular learner characteristics for investigation, the measurement of those

⁴ Oxford R. and M. Ehrman. 1993. Second language research on individual differences. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 13, 188-205.

⁵ Gallbraith V. and R.C.Gardner. 1988. *Individual differences*. London, Ontario, UWO.

characteristics, and the actual practical application of such measurements. One of the main problems is that the research is often of very little practical value to teachers and other practitioners. Rather than providing insights into how learners differ and how best to help them, the very nature of the research and, in particular, the approach taken to measurement, has somehow lost sight of the individual.

Some problems with the notion of individual differences

Research methodology

In order to understand our concerns we need to look briefly at the research methodology that has frequently been used in examining individual differences. Interest in this topic arose mainly within a *psychometric* tradition of psychology, that is, one concerned with the scientific measurement of such human traits and abilities. For many psychologists, the road to progress has been seen as developing an increasing accuracy in the measurement of human characteristics such as intelligence, extroversion, risk-taking behaviour and so on. The results of such measurements have then been used to predict individuals' learning capabilities, and action has often been taken as a result of these predictions, for example, streaming learners, or grouping them by ability.

Thus, it seemed to be a perfectly logical step in language learning research to build upon previous work in psychology by attempting to measure individual characteristics and relate these to language learning outcomes. S67 for example, there is research to show that the more intelligent people are, the easier it is for them to learn a foreign language, or that learning a language depends to some extent on having an aptitude for languages, or that risk-takers are more successful language learners.

There are literally hundreds of research studies which have investigated the contribution of individual differences to language learning in this way. Summarised briefly, the psychometric approach that has generally been taken

to such studies is as follows: (1) a hypothesis is made that a particular characteristic is likely to influence success in language learning; (2) a means of assessing that characteristic is selected or constructed; (3) aspects of that characteristic and success in language learning are both measured, usually with reference to a specific group of learners; (4) the results of the two measures are submitted to statistical analysis and statistically significant relationships are sought; (5) conclusions are drawn about the contribution of the particular characteristic to learning a language.

A standardised test of the particular characteristics may already exist, for example, self-esteem, field dependence/independence or extroversion/introversion. Otherwise, a test is constructed for the purpose, often with a particular focus on language learning, for example, language anxiety (Horwitz and Young 1991)⁶. This test is then subjected to appropriate measures of reliability so that it can be standardised.

However, what is often open to question is precisely what the particular test is actually measuring. What is sometimes forgotten in research, into individual differences is that the characteristic selected is in fact no more than a researcher's best effort at conceptualising what the particular trait involves. This becomes what psychologists term a *hypothetical construct*. There is no such thing as 'intelligence' or 'field dependence', or 'motivation', but it can sometimes be convenient to treat such entities as if they do exist so that we can construct tests to measure them. Unfortunately, the outcome of that testing procedure can then come to represent in people's minds the meaning of that construct. For example, for many years the only definition of intelligence that was offered in many psychological textbooks was that 'intelligence is what intelligence tests measure'.

Test constructors often devote considerable time and energy to strengthening the *reliability* and *validity* of their tests so that they can be

⁶ Horwitz E. and D.J.Young.1991. Language Anxiety: from theory and research to classroom implications Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall.

standardised. Reliability is often equated with stability, that is, the test produces similar results on more than one occasion. However, there is a danger that this can lead to a belief that the test is measuring a relatively fixed characteristic, even if no such characteristic actually exists. We would argue instead that individual traits such as intelligence or aptitude or anxiety are more usefully treated as variable, as context specific, and amenable to change. It would follow from this that a test should be expected to produce different results on different occasions.

The validity of a test, on the other hand, is supposed to indicate whether that test actually does measure what it is supposed to measure. Researchers often neatly sidestep this obstacle, however, by comparing one test with another which is supposed to be measuring the same thing. This is known as concurrent validity. Thus, if you constructed your own new test of listening comprehension, you might well test its validity by comparing people's scores on it with their scores on existing tests. Construct validity, on the other hand, indicates how well the test relates to the construct under investigation. However significant this might be found to be, or even if a test has a high rating for validity, it does not necessarily mean that the trait itself actually exists. The point is that it is extremely difficult to construct a test which is truly valid in that it really measures what it is supposed to measure.

Another problem with measurement procedures on standardised tests is that, because of the way the test is constructed, in any given population, scores on the test will be distributed according to a normal distribution curve. Most people will obtain scores around the mean, and a very small percentage (2-3%) will score considerably above or below the mean. Thus the tests can tell us very little about most individuals, whose scores fall somewhere in the middle. What they tell us about is groups of people and average scores, rather than individuals. They can, therefore, give teachers very little information about what to do with individual learners in their classrooms.

Selection of individual characteristics

The next problem is how the various individual characteristics described in the literature are selected. Gradman and Hanania (1991) identified 22 different variables referred to in the individual differences literature, whilst Oxford and Erhman (1993) choose to focus on just nine. In his seminal work on the topic, Skehan (1989) examines the research on eight slightly different variables.

The somewhat arbitrary nature of this selection is nowhere more apparent than in the case of *cognitive style*. The most common styles discussed in the literature are *field dependence* and *field independence*. If people are field dependent, their perception is dominated by the whole context, that is, they perceive things in relation to the context, whereas field-independent people perceive items as discrete or unrelated to the surrounding 'field'. Dozens of studies have been carried out investigating the relationship of this variable to successful language learning. Some of them claim to have found that people scoring higher on a test of field independence tend to do better than others at learning a foreign language (d'Anglejan and Renaud 1985). However, the question that remains is what exactly is meant by field dependence or field independence.

The most widely used test of field dependence/independence in language learning studies is the Embedded Figures Test. An example is shown in Figure 10. Subjects are asked to find the 'simple form' shown on the left in the complex figure on the right. If they can do this, they are supposedly field independent. However, it is still unclear as to why success in picking out embedded figures should represent different styles of learning.

Oxford and Ehrman make a valiant attempt to bring some sense to these studies by referring to *global* and *analytic* learning styles. However, whatever field dependence and field independence are, these constructs are being measured by an obscure test of visual perception which is currently little used by professional psychologists, and which appears to bear little relation to

learning style. Griffiths and Sheen (1992) provide a strongly critical analysis of the field dependence/independence construct, which is only partially refuted by Chappelle (1992).

There are other forms of individual difference which appear to be related to a sounder theoretical rationale. Oxford and Ehrman select motivation as one such variable, motivation does not refer to a fixed trait or characteristic that individuals possess more or less of. We argue instead that the term 'motivation' is more helpfully used to refer to a state of temporary or prolonged goal-oriented behaviour which individuals actively choose to engage in. How highly a person is motivated to perform a certain task such as learning vocabulary, grammar or any other language related activity, will depend upon a complex set of interacting variables. These variables will certainly include some aspect of individual disposition such as *motivational style*, but will also include the nature and perceived purpose of the task, the actions of the teacher and the nature of the teacher-learner relationship. Motivation is very-much context bound, but is also amenable to change.

Another characteristic that has been subject to a considerable amount of investigation is anxiety. Several tests have been constructed to measure this characteristic, e.g. the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (Horwitz and Young 1991). However, what studies using such instruments tend to show is that anxiety is also highly situation specific and itself affected by a number of other factors (Horwitz and Young 1990). Moreover, it is clear that behaviour which may be construed as anxious within one culture would not necessarily be so construed in another.

Perhaps the most thoroughly researched area of individual difference in language learning is that of *aptitude*. (See Skehan 1989 for a comprehensive review of this literature.) Most language teachers would readily testify that individual learners differ in the ease with which they learn a foreign language. It seems only reasonable to assume, therefore, that a major contributory factor to this is their ability or language aptitude. If we can measure that aptitude

prior to teaching, we should be able to predict the speed at which a learner can learn, and adjust the pace of our teaching accordingly. We can also excuse our lack of success in teaching some learners by pointing to their lack of aptitude for language learning.

For more than three decades, attempts have been made to measure learners' language aptitude by means of such tests as the Modern Language Aptitude Test (Carroll and Sapon 19'59) and to use these results in a predictive way. However, the predictive value of the MLAT is not particularly high, nor does it discriminate well between learners at all ability levels, i.e. it is quite good at discriminating between learners who are likely to perform very poorly or very well, but does not discriminate well between the large majority in the middle.

As we explained earlier, this is, in fact, a significant weakness of all such standardised tests. What they tell us is that about two-thirds of any population will score within the average range on that test. Only a small minority will score at either extreme. Thus, they are unable to tell us very much at all about most individuals because of the way they are constructed. To summarise the points made so far:

- Traditional research on individual differences has been mainly concerned with measuring, labelling and grouping people.
- The purpose of such research is usually not to identify how individuals differ but to group them according to perceived similarities.
- The findings have been of limited practical value because they do not inform us how we can help any individual to become a more effective learner.
- In many instances they do not even help us to improve the functioning of the groups that are identified by the research.
- Research in this area is often based on a theory of learning which views people's behaviour as being heavily influenced by certain traits or attributes which are fixed.

Indeed, the whole area of individual differences is fraught with unanswered questions. In dealing with averages and statistics we appear somehow to have lost track of the individual. This kind of approach does not help us to deal effectively with such issues as how individuals make their own sense of the process of learning a language, or how we as teachers can best help our learners, given that they are all different. We therefore consider a totally different approach is called for. We need an approach which will focus on the unique contribution that each individual brings to the learning situation, and on how the teacher can assist the learner in learning most effectively. We suggest that there are several useful starting points.

- We must start from a theory of learning that is robust and to which as researchers and teachers we subscribe.
- Such a theory should enable us to focus upon the uniqueness of individuals as well as helping us to see what they have in common.
- It should also be a theory of how people change rather than how they stay the same.
- This should give rise to implications for action and intervention.
- It should enable us also to support individuals in taking personal control of their own learning.
- In doing so it must be connected to individuals' views of themselves as learners.

II. INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES IN SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNING

Before doing research reflect on your experience as language learner. Then interview several friends, colleagues, or family members about their experiences learning a second or foreign language. If there is language they speak with a high level of proficiency, ask about the environment in which the language was heard and used, the kind of instruction (if any) they received, how long they used the language, and the age at which they began learning. Ask about the kinds of relationships they had with speakers of the language and whether they felt a part of a community in which it is spoken. Ask whether there is a language they failed to learn, even though they had some exposure to, or instruction in, that language. Keep notes about your own experiences and those of the people you interview and refer to them as you read this chapter about individual differences in second language learning.

As we saw children are almost always successful in acquiring the language or languages that are spoken (or signed) to them in early childhood, provided that they have adequate opportunities to use the language over a period of several years. This contrasts with our experience of second language learners, whose success varies greatly.

Many of us believe that individual differences that are inherent in learner can predict success or failure in language learning. Such belief may be based on our own experience or that of people we have known. For example, many teachers are convinced that extroverted learners who interact without inhibition in the second language and seek opportunities to practice language skills will be the most successful learner. In addition to an outgoing personality, other characteristics often believed to predict success in language learning are intelligence, aptitude, motivation, and age at which learning begins.

In this chapter, we will see whether these intuitions are supported by research findings. To what extent can we predict differences in the success of second language

acquisition if we have information about learners' personalities their general and specific intellectual abilities, their motivation, or their age?

We know that some people learn languages more quickly than others. Even in first language acquisition, the rate of development varies widely. Some children can string together five-, six-, and seven-word sentences at an age when other children are just beginning to label items in their immediate environment. Nevertheless, children eventually master their first language.

It has been observed countless times that, in the same foreign language class, some students progress rapidly while others struggle along making very slow progress. Even in what seem to be ideal conditions, some learners seem to make little progress in learning. Researchers - for example, Neil Naiman and his colleagues (1995)⁷ - have tried to identify the personal characteristics that make one learner more successful than another.

Table 3.1 shows a list of some of the characteristics that have been thought to contribute to successful language learning. In your experience - as a second language learner or teacher - which characteristics seem to you most likely to be associated with success in second language acquisition in the classroom? Which ones do you think are less important?

The characteristics listed in Table 3.1 can be classified into several categories: motivation, intellectual abilities, personality, and learning preferences. However, many of the characteristics cannot be assigned exclusively to one category. For example, 'is willing to make mistakes' can be considered a personality characteristic. It might also be seen as an aspect of motivation if the learner is willing to make mistakes in order to get a message across.

2.1. RESEARCH ON LEARNER CHARACTERISTICS

Perhaps the best way to begin our discussion is to describe how research on the influence of individual differences on second language learning is

⁷ Naiman N. 1995. The good language learner. Clevedon: multilingual Matters.

usually done. When researchers are interested in finding out whether a VARIABLE such as motivation affects second language learning, they usually select a group of learners and give them a questionnaire to measure the type and degree of their motivation. Then some kind of test is used to assess their second language proficiency. The test and the questionnaire are both scored, and the researcher uses a statistical procedure called a correlation. The correlation shows how likely it is that learners with high scores on the motivation questionnaire will also have high scores on the language test. If the two variables (motivation and language proficiency) are found to be positively correlated, the researcher will try to discover just what the relationship between them is.

Rate each of the following characteristics on a scale of 1-5. Use 1 to indicate a characteristic that you think is ‘very important’ and 5 to indicate a characteristic that you consider ‘not at all important’ in predicting success in second language learning.

A good language learner:

- | | | | | | | |
|-----------|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| a) | is a willing and accurate guesser | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| b) | tries to get a message across even if specific language knowledge is lacking | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| c) | is willing to make mistakes | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| d) | constantly looks for patterns in the language | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| e) | practises as often as possible | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| f) | analyses his or her own speech and the speech of others | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| g) | attends to whether his or her performance meets the standards he or she has learned | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| h) | enjoys grammar exercises | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| i) | begins learning in childhood | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| j) | has an above-average IQ | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| k) | has good academic skills | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

1) has a good self-image and lots of confidence 1 2 3 4 5

Table 3.1 Characteristics of the 'good language learner'

Although the correlation procedure seems straightforward, it requires careful interpretation. One problem is that, unlike variables such as height or age, it is not possible to directly observe and measure variables such as motivation, extroversion, or even intelligence. These are just labels for an entire range of behaviours and characteristics. Furthermore, characteristics such as these are not independent of each other, and researchers have sometimes used the same label to describe different sets of behavioural traits. For example, in motivation questionnaires, learners may be asked how often they have opportunities to use their second language with native speakers. The assumption behind the question is that those who report that they frequently have such opportunities are highly motivated to learn. This seems reasonable, but it is not so simple. If a learner responds that he or she frequently interacts with speakers of the second language, it may not be because he or she is more motivated to learn. Rather, it might be that this individual lives where there are more opportunities for language practice in informal contexts than those who report a low frequency of interaction. Because it is usually impossible to separate these two variables (i.e. willingness to interact and opportunities to interact), we cannot conclude whether it is motivation or opportunity that is most closely associated with success.

Perhaps the most serious error in interpreting correlations is the conclusion that one of the variables causes the other. The fact that two things tend to occur together or increase and decrease in a similar pattern does not necessarily mean that one caused the other. While it may be that one variable influences the other, it may also be that both are influenced by something else entirely. Research on motivation is perhaps the best context in which to illustrate this. Learners who are successful may indeed be highly motivated. But can we conclude that they became successful because of their motivation? It is also plausible that early success heightened their motivation, or that both

success and motivation are due to their special aptitude for language learning or the favourable context in which they are learning.

Another difficulty in assessing the relationship between individual learner characteristics and second language learning is how language proficiency is defined and measured. In the second language learning literature, some studies report that learners with a higher IQ (intelligence quotient) are more successful language learners, than those with a lower IQ, while other studies report no such correlation. One explanation for these conflicting findings is that the language proficiency tests used in different studies do not measure the same kind of knowledge. That is, IQ may be less closely correlated to measures of conversational fluency than to tests that measure metalinguistic knowledge.

Research on individual differences must also take into account the social and educational settings in which learners find themselves. Bonny Norton and Kelleen Toohey (2001)⁸ argue that, even when individuals possess some of the characteristics that have been associated with the 'good language learner', their language acquisition may not be successful if they are not able to gain access to social relationships in situations where they are perceived as valued partners in communication. Members of some immigrant and minority groups are too often marginalized by social and educational practices that limit their opportunities to engage in communication with peers, colleagues, and even teachers. In these social conditions, individuals who approach a new language with the cognitive and motivational characteristics typical of the good language learner' may not achieve the proficiency that these characteristics would predict.

Understanding the relationship between individual differences, social situations, and success in second language learning is a great challenge. Nevertheless, research in this area is of great importance to both researchers and educators. Researchers seek to know how different cognitive and

⁸ Norton B. and K.Tooley. 2001. Changing perspectives on good language learners. TESOL Quarterly 35/2: 307-22

personality variables are related and how they interact with learners experiences so that they can gain a better understanding of human learning. Educators hope to find ways of helping learners with different characteristics achieve success in second language learning. The larger community is also concerned because of the enormous impact second language learning has in shaping opportunities for education, employment, mobility, and other societal benefits.

Intelligence

The term 'intelligence' has traditionally been used to refer to performance on certain kinds of tests. These tests are often associated with success in school and a link between intelligence and second language learning has sometimes been reported. Over the years, some research has shown that IQ scores were a good means of predicting success in second language learning. However, as suggested above, IQ tests may be more strongly related to metalinguistic knowledge than to communicative ability. For example, in a study with students in French immersion programmes in Canada, Fred Genesee(1976) found that, while intelligence was related to the development of French second language reading, grammar, and vocabulary, it was unrelated to oral production skills. This suggests that the kind of ability measured by traditional IQ tests may be a strong predictor when it comes to learning that involves language analysis and rule learning. This kind of 'intelligence' may play a less important role in classrooms where the instruction focuses more on communication and interaction. Indeed, many students whose general academic performance is weak experience considerable success in second language learning if they are given the right opportunities.

In recent years, many educators have been influenced by Howard Gardner's (1993) proposal that individuals have 'multiple intelligences' and that traditional IQ tests have assessed only a limited range of abilities. Among the 'multiple intelligences' Gardner includes abilities in the areas of music,

interpersonal relations, and athletics, as well as the verbal intelligence that is most often associated with success in school.

Aptitude

Specific abilities thought to predict success in language learning have been studied under the title of language learning “aptitude”. One of the pioneers in this area, John Carroll (1991), has characterized aptitude in terms of the ability to learn quickly. Thus, we may hypothesize that a learner with high aptitude may learn with greater ease and speed but that other learners may also be successful if they persevere.

Over several decades, the most widely used aptitude tests have been the Modern Language Aptitude Test (MLAT) (Carroll and Sapon 1959) and the Pimsleur Language Aptitude Battery (PLAB) (Pimsleur 1966). Recently, Paul Meara (2005a) and his colleagues have developed tests that are taken on a computer. All the tests are based on the view that aptitude has several components. All measure the ability- to (1) identify and memorize new sounds, (2) understand the function of particular words in sentences, (3) figure out grammatical rules from language samples, and (4) remember new words. While early research revealed a substantial relationship between performance on the MLAT or PLAB and performance in foreign language learning, these studies were conducted at a time when second language teaching was based on grammar translation or audiolingual methods (see Chapter 6). With the adoption of a more communicative approach to teaching, many teachers and researchers came to believe that the abilities targeted by these tests were irrelevant to the process of language acquisition. However, others suggest that some of the abilities measured by aptitude tests are predictive of success even in settings where the emphasis is on communicative interaction. For example, Leila Ranta (2002) found that children who were good at analysing language (one component of aptitude that is targeted by aptitude tests) were the most successful learners in an English second language program in which activities

almost never involved direct attention to grammar. Nick Ellis (2001) and others have hypothesized that working memory may be the most important variable in predicting success for learners in many language learning situations. Peter Skehan (1989) argues that successful language learners may not be strong in all of the components of aptitude. For example, some individuals may have strong memories but only average abilities in language analysis. Learners' strengths and weaknesses in these different components may account for their ability to succeed in different types of instructional programs.

In a Canadian language programme for adult learners of French, Marjorie Wesche (1981) studied the progress of students who were placed in instructional programmes that were either compatible or incompatible with their aptitude profile and information about their learning experiences. In the compatible groupings, students who were high on analytic ability, but average on memory, were assigned to teaching that focused on grammatical structures, and learners with good memory but average analytic skills were placed in a class where the teaching was organized around the functional use of the second language in specific situations. In the incompatible groupings, students were placed in classes that did not correspond to their aptitude profiles. Wesche reported a high level of student and teacher satisfaction when students were matched with compatible teaching environments. In addition, some evidence indicated that matched students were able to attain significantly higher levels of achievement than those who were mismatched.

2.2. Learning styles

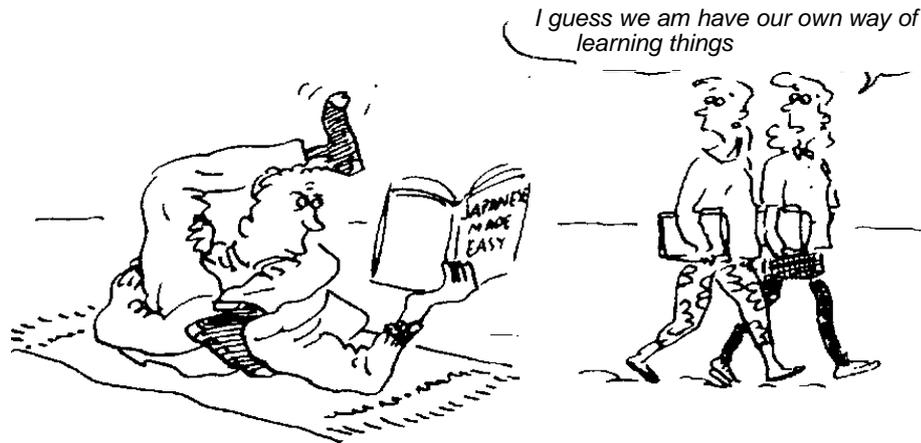
The term 'learning style' has been used to describe an individual's natural, habitual, and preferred way of absorbing, processing, and retaining new information and skills (Reid 1995). We have all heard people say that they cannot learn something until they have seen it. Such learners would fall into the group called 'Visual' learners. Other people, who may be called 'aural'

learners, seem to learn best 'by ear'. For others, referred to as 'kinaesthetic' learners, physical action such as miming or role-play seems to help the learning process. These are referred to as perceptually-based learning styles. Considerable research has also focused on distinctions between different cognitive learning styles. Individuals have been described as field independent or field dependent, according to whether they tend to separate details from the general background or tend to see things more holistically. For a number of years, it was widely reported that there was a strong relationship between field independence and success in second language learning. However, a review of the research leads Zoltan Dornyei and Peter Skehan (2003) to conclude that more research will be needed to identify the nature of the relationship.

There are many questions about how learning styles interact with success in language learning. For one thing, it is difficult to determine whether they reflect immutable differences or whether they develop (and thus can be changed) through experience. There is a need for considerably more research. Nevertheless, when learners express a preference for seeing something written or spending more time in a language laboratory, we should not assume that their ways of working are wrong, even if they seem to be in conflict with the pedagogical approach we have adopted. Instead, we should encourage learners to use all means available to them. At a minimum, research on learning styles should make us sceptical of claims that a single teaching method or textbook will suit the needs of all learners.

Before we leave the topic of language learning aptitude and learning styles, it is perhaps appropriate to look at two extremes of the aptitude continuum. Some people, whose academic performance is usually very good, find themselves terribly frustrated in their attempts to learn a foreign language. Lenore Ganschow and Richard Sparks (2001) and their colleagues have studied many cases of young adults who find foreign language learning exceedingly difficult. They identified several ways in which these students

differ from successful learners. Most perform poorly on at least some of the measures that make up aptitude tests. Some have problems with certain



kinds of verbal skills, even in their own language. What is perhaps most important about this research is that, with great effort and instructional support, some of these students are able to succeed in spite of their difficulties. The challenge is to find instructional approaches that meet the needs of learners with a variety of aptitude and learning style profiles.

At the other end of the aptitude continuum we find individuals whose achievements seem to defy every prediction about what is possible in second language learning. Lorraine Obler (1989) reported on the case of one American man who seemed able to acquire oral fluency in a new language in 'a matter of weeks'. Neil Smith and Ianthi-Maria Tsimpli (1995) have followed a *polyglot savant* who learned many languages with apparent ease. This achievement was particularly astonishing in light of the fact that his overall cognitive functioning and social skills were quite limited. Such exceptional learners suggest that an aptitude for language learning is at least partly independent of cognitive, social, and personality characteristics that are often associated with successful learning.

We are all different. We all have different physical appearance, character, strengths and weaknesses. Consequently, we are all different as learners too. While studying at school you probably noticed that with the same teacher some learners made more progress than others. Why? Some people might answer that they are “cleverer”. However, in reality we are all intelligent and we are all able to learn. It is just that some learners know how they learn best and make use of this.

So the first step to successful learning is understanding how you learn best.

Task 1. Think of your own experience of learning English (at school, university, with a private tutor, or on your own) and complete the following

<p><i>I learn better if...</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • • • •
--

statement⁹.

Have you been learning English		How long?	Was it successful or not?	Why?
at school?	<input type="checkbox"/>			
at university?	<input type="checkbox"/>			
with a private tutor?	<input type="checkbox"/>			
on your own?	<input type="checkbox"/>			

Do you prefer to learn English:

- with a teacher who tells you what and how

to learn?

⁹ Developed in the framework of Encouraging Learner Autonomy Project © British Council 2009

- on your own and decide yourself what to

do?

The following set of statements will help you to reflect on how you prefer to work: with or without a teacher.

Task 2. Rate the statements below depending on how true they are of you. Rating: **3** for “very true of me”, **2** for “true”, **1** for “sort of true”, **0** for “no strong preference”. You may choose only one response for each pair of statements.

I prefer...

to decide what I want to learn on my own	3	2	1	0	1	2	3	a teacher to tell me what I should learn
to learn things my own way	3	2	1	0	1	2	3	to be told exactly how to learn
to decide when and where I want to study	3	2	1	0	1	2	3	to be told when and where to study
to choose my own books/materials for learning	3	2	1	0	1	2	3	a teacher to decide which books/materials I should learn from
to explore on my own how to use computer software	3	2	1	0	1	2	3	to go on a course to learn about new software
to assess my knowledge and skills myself	3	2	1	0	1	2	3	a teacher to assess me
to work out grammar rules for myself	3	2	1	0	1	2	3	a teacher to explain grammar rules to me
to look up new words in dictionaries or on the internet	3	2	1	0	1	2	3	to ask a teacher the meaning of new words
to decide myself what	3	2	1	0	1	2	3	a teacher to decide

	kind of extra language learning activities (e.g. watching films in English, reading fiction etc.) I want and need to do								what kind of extra language learning activities I need to do
0	to motivate myself to learn	3	2	1	0	1	2	3	to be motivated by a teacher to learn

Score for the left column _____

Score for the right column _____

Interpreting your score

- If you have more scores towards the left column, it suggests you have a strong preference for taking control over how you work. This is very useful in developing as an independent, autonomous learner, and setting targets for yourself. Look for the statements that have a low score in this column and try to develop these skills in yourself. Different sections of the ELA Guide might help you in developing these skills.

- If you have more scores towards the right column, it suggests you are very open to direction and leadership from others. This can be very useful as a way of making sure that you are going in the right direction, that you are using time economically for the purposes of team working. However, it is worth considering whether you need to start taking more control over your own learning and being more open to exploration and risk-taking. Look for the statements in the opposite column and try to adopt some of the strategies¹⁰.

Section 2. How do you learn: by seeing, listening or doing?

While learning, we employ our senses. But some of us employ one sense more than others. For example, some people learn information best by seeing (**visual**

¹⁰ Adapted from Cottrell. S. (2003) *Study Skills Handbook*. UK: Palgrave. p.50

learners), others by listening (**auditory learners**) or doing something (**kinaesthetic learners**).



What kind of learner do you think you are?

Task 3. Tick (V) the learning style(s) that you think best describes you?

Auditor

Visual

Kinaesthetic

The total scores for each style indicate your preferred learning style or styles. There are no right or wrong answers. Some people have very strong preferences while others have more evenly balanced preferences, with no particularly strong style. The point is simply to try to understand yourself as much as you can and identify your strengths and then make best use of them.

Visual learners learn best by seeing; more often they do well using books, and cards for memorization. Visual learners will find it useful to:

- use visual materials such as pictures, charts, maps, graphs and so on
- use colour to highlight important points in texts
- use diagrams, spidergrams and the like
- use multi-media (CD-ROMs. Internet, videos)
- read illustrated books to maintain interest
- visualise information as a picture to help memorization

Auditory learners may have the easiest time developing conversation skills. They benefit more than other types of learners by listening to instructional tapes, watching TV, listening to radio, or listening to music. Auditory learners will find it useful to:

- participate in discussions and debates
- make speeches and presentations
- read texts aloud
- create musical jingles or rhymes to help memorization
- listen to songs and watch films in English

Kinaesthetic learners often need to use some sort of physical activity to help them learn.

For many, taking notes during class or from textbooks, and using software that encourages interactivity can help. Kinaesthetic learners will find it useful to:

- move around to learn new things
- take frequent study breaks
- do more than one task at the same time
- chew gum while studying
- copying native speakers or good pieces of writing to get used to patterns
- skim through reading materials to get the gist of it before setting down to

read it in detail

- holding a pen or some other object while thinking.

Section 3. How do you deal with new information or a task

Task 4. Imagine you want to learn how to ride a bicycle. Which of these four options would you go for first?



Which of the four people (Ali, Rita, Aysha and Hasan) use the following approaches to learning:

1. _____ likes to try things out as a way of learning (Activist).
2. _____ likes to think before doing (Reflector).
3. _____ likes to know why they are doing something (Pragmatist).
4. _____ likes to know the principles before doing something (Theorist).

Task 5. Read the following descriptions and try to relate them to yourself. Are you an Activist, Reflector, Pragmatist Theorist or mixture of 2 or 3 types?

If you are an **Activist** you learn best from activities in which there are (is):

- new experiences and challenges to learn from
- short 'here and now' tasks involving teamwork and problem-solving
- excitement, change and variety
- situations in which new ideas can be developed without any limitations
- opportunities for taking risks.

If you are a **Reflector** you learn best from activities where you:

- are allowed or encouraged to watch / think / ponder on activities
- have time to think before acting, to digest information before

commenting

- can carry out careful, detailed research
- have time to review your learning
- are helped to exchange views with other people
- can reach a decision without pressure and tight deadlines.

If you are a Theorist you learn best from activities where:

- what is being offered is part of a system, model, concept or theory
- you can explore the associations and interrelationships between ideas,

events and situations

- you are intellectually stretched, e.g. by being asked to analyse and

evaluate, then generalise

- you are in structured situations with a clear purpose
- you see interesting ideas and concepts, whether or not they are

immediately relevant.

If you are a Pragmatist you learn best from activities where:

- there is an obvious link between the subject matter and a ‘real life’

problem

- you are shown techniques for doing things with obvious practical

advantages

- you see a model you can imitate, or examples / anecdotes

- you are given immediate opportunities to put what you have learned

into practice

- you can concentrate on practical issues, such as drawing up action

plans or giving tips to others.

Section 4. How do you prefer working or learning: individually or with others?

To learn successfully and, you need to find out how well you can cooperate with other learners to achieve your study goals.

Task 6. The following set of question looks at how far you prefer to work with or without other people. Rate the following statements below depending on how true they are of you. Rating: **3** for “very true of me”, **2** for “true”, **1** for “sort of true”, **0** for “no strong preference”. You may chose only one response for each pair of statements.

1	I prefer group work								I prefer working alone
2	In a Learning Centre. I prefer to sit near others								In a Learning Centre, I prefer to sit alone
3	I like to study with a friend								I prefer to study on my own
4	I value hearing other people’s opinion								I prefer to develop my own ideas
5	I enjoy interaction in group work								I enjoy thinking about an idea on my own
6	I learn more through discussion rather than reading								I learn more from reading than discussion
7	More people, more ideas								I come up with more ideas on my own
8	For me, team working is very useful								For me, team working is useless
9	I like to discuss my achievements and problems in learning English with other learners								I prefer to keep my achievements and problems to myself
10	I like another learner to give me feedback on my writing before I go to a Counsellor								I prefer to check my own writing.

Score for the left column_____ Score for the left column_____

Interpreting your score

- If **you** have more scores towards the left column it suggests that you have strong preference for working with others. This can be very useful for gaining a wide set of perspectives and ideas, for developing social skills, for team working and for mutual support. Danger points are possible when you over-rely on others and don't develop ideas in an independent way.

- If you have more scores for the right column it suggests a strong preference for working alone. This can be useful for avoiding distraction, achieving goals, and developing independence. However, it is worth considering what can be gained from working with others and different perspectives that can be opened after reconciling different styles and techniques. It may be useful to experiment **with** the features of the opposite column.

Follow-up

Being aware of your strengths as a learner will allow you make best use of them as described in the case below.

I have discovered that I prefer to have to teacher when I learn as I like someone to decide for me which books to choose, tell me what to do and how to do it. After doing the tests, I have discovered that I am mostly a visual and kinaesthetic learner. How, I know that I learn best when I see pictures, charts and diagrams, so I will use them more. I have learnt that chewing gum while learning is not as bad as my teacher used to say! I also discovered that I am a pragmatist, because I like to practice new words and grammar immediately, and, as I like to work with others, I will learn English with my friends. For example, I can ask my friend to give me feedback on my writing before showing it to the Counsellor.



Task 7. Now write down the things that you discovered about yourself and how you will make use of your learning style in learning English.

As a learner I am...	How I will best make use of it

2.3. Personality characteristics. The “good” language learner

A number of personality characteristics have been proposed as likely to affect second language learning, but it has not been easy to demonstrate their effects in empirical studies. As with other research investigating the effects of individual characteristics on second language learning, different studies measuring a similar personality trait produce different results. For example, it is often argued that an extroverted person is well suited to language learning. However, research does not always support this conclusion. Although some studies have found that success in language learning is correlated with learners’ scores on questionnaires measuring characteristics associated with extroversion such as assertiveness and adventurousness, others have found that many successful language learners do not get high scores on measures of extroversion. Lily Wong-Fillmore (1979) found that, in certain learning situations, the quiet observant learner may have greater success.

Another aspect of personality that has been studied is inhibition. It has been suggested that inhibition discourages risk-taking, which is necessary for progress in language learning. This is often considered to be a particular problem for adolescents, who are more self-conscious than younger learners. In a series of studies Alexander Guiora and his colleagues (1972) found support for the claim that inhibition is a negative force, at least for second language pronunciation performance. One study involved an analysis of the

effects of small doses of alcohol, known for its ability to reduce inhibition, on pronunciation. Study participants who drank small amounts of alcohol did better on pronunciation tests than those who did not drink any. While results such as these are interesting, they may have more to do with performance than with learning. We may also note, in passing, that when larger doses of alcohol were administered, pronunciation rapidly deteriorated!

Learner anxiety—feelings of worry nervousness, and stress that many students experience when learning a second language—has been extensively investigated. For a long time, researchers thought of anxiety as a permanent feature of a learners personality. In fact, the majority of language anxiety scales, like the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope 1986) measure anxiety in this way. So, for example, students are assumed to be anxious if they ‘strongly agree’ with statements such as ‘I become anxious when I have to speak in the second language classroom’. However, such questionnaire responses do not take account of the possibility that anxiety can be temporary and context-specific. More recent research investigating learner anxiety in second language classrooms acknowledges that anxiety is more likely to be dynamic and dependent on particular situations and circumstances. This permits distinctions to be made between for example, a student who feels anxious when giving an oral presentation in front of the whole class but not when interacting with peers in group-work. Whatever the context, anxiety can play an important role in second language learning if it interferes with the learning process. Peter MacIntyre (1995) argues that ‘because anxious students are focused on both the task at hand and their reactions to it... [they] will not learn as quickly as relaxed students’.

Of course, it has also been argued that not all anxiety - is bad and that a certain amount of tension can have a positive effect and even facilitate learning. Experiencing anxiety before a test or an oral presentation can provide the right combination of motivation and focus to succeed on it.

Because anxiety is often considered to be a negative term, some researchers have chosen to use other terms they consider to be more neutral. In an ethnographic study of young adults learning French in an intensive summer programme, Guy Spielmann and Mary Radnofsky (2001) use the term 'tension'. They found that tension, as experienced by the learners in their study, was perceived as both beneficial and detrimental and that it was also related to the learners' social interactions inside and outside the classroom.

A learner's 'willingness to communicate' has also been related to anxiety. We have all experienced occasions when we have gone to great lengths to avoid communicating in a second/foreign language. This often has to do with the number of people present, the topic of conversation, and the formality of the circumstances. A colleague in Canada, who works in the area of second language learning and speaks several languages, recently confessed that he avoided the corner store in his neighbourhood because the proprietor always spoke French to him. He recognized the proprietor's efforts to help him improve his skills in this new language, and was grateful for it, but, as he told us with embarrassment, it was just easier to go to the store where he could use English. According to some researchers, learners who willingly communicate in a wide range of conversational interactions are able to do so because 'their prior language learning has led to development of self-confidence, which is based on a lack of anxiety combined with a sufficient level of communicative competence, arising from a series of reasonably pleasant [second language] experiences' (MacInryre, Clement, Dornyei, and Noels 1998:548).

Several other personality characteristics such as self-esteem, empathy, dominance, talkativeness, and responsiveness have also been studied. However, in general, the available research does not show a single clearly-defined relationship between personality traits and second language acquisition. And, as indicated earlier, the major difficulty in investigating personality characteristics is that of identification and measurement. Another explanation that has been offered for the mixed findings of personality studies

is that personality variables may be a major factor only in the acquisition of conversational skills, not in the acquisition of literacy or academic skills. The confused picture of the research on personality factors may be due in part to the fact, that comparisons are made between studies that measure communicative ability and studies that measure grammatical accuracy or metalinguistic knowledge. Personality variables seem to be consistently related to the former, but not to the latter. Finally, most of the research on personality variables has been carried out within a quantitative research paradigm, that is, an approach that relies heavily on measuring learners' scores on personality questionnaires and relating these to language test performance. Some researchers have argued that a more qualitative approach to understanding and investigating personality variables is needed to adequately capture their depth and complexity, especially as they emerge and evolve over time.

The 'good' language learner

Much of the research into learning strategy preferences has been concerned with identifying learning strategy preferences with a view to isolating those characteristics of the 'good' language learner. Rubin and Thompson (1983) suggest that 'good' or efficient learners tend to exhibit the following characteristics as they go about learning a second language.

1. Good learners find their own way.
2. Good learners organise information about language.
3. Good learners are creative and experiment with language.
4. Good learners make their own opportunities, and find strategies for getting practice in using the language inside and outside the classroom.
5. Good learners learn to live with uncertainty and develop strategies for making sense of the target language without wanting to understand every word.

6. Good learners use mnemonics (rhymes, word associations, etc. to recall what has been learned.)

7. Good learners make errors work.

8. Good learners use linguistic knowledge, including knowledge of their first language in mastering a second language.

9. Good learners let the context (extra-linguistic knowledge and knowledge of the world) help them in comprehension.

10. Good learners learn to make intelligent guesses.

11. Good learners learn chunks of language as wholes and formalised routines to help them perform 'beyond their competence'.

12. Good learners learn production techniques (e.g. techniques for keeping a conversation going).

13. Good learners learn different styles of speech and writing and learn to vary their language according to the formality of the situation.

We investigated forty-four 'good' language learners in order to find out whether there were any common patterns in their experiences. The learners had all learned English as a foreign language in a variety of Southeast Asian countries including Hong Kong, Thailand, Indonesia, the Philippines, Malaysia and Singapore. They were all 'good' learners in that they had all attained bilingual competence in the language, and all were teachers-of English as a foreign language. There were two strands to this research, one which looked at the 'good' language learner, and the other which explored the effect of teachers' learning strategy preferences on their own teaching style. I shall not be concerned with this second strand here.

There were two reasons for selecting language teachers as research subjects. In the first place, by selecting English language teachers it was easier to locate subjects with high levels of proficiency. Secondly, it was felt that because teachers would have the metacognitive and metalinguistic language to

conceptualise their experiences, they would be better able to reflect on and articulate their foreign language learning experiences.

Data for the study were provided by a questionnaire and a follow-up interview. The questionnaire was an adaptation of the one used by Willing, and asked subjects to rate thirty statements about learning preferences such as, 'in English classes, I like to learn by reading', 'I like the teacher to explain everything to us', 'I like the teacher to let me find my mistakes', 'I like to study grammar'. Subjects were required to complete the questionnaire on four separate occasions. On each occasion they were required to respond to the questionnaire from four different perspectives:

A When you learned English, which of the following ways of learning did you like?

B When you learned English, which of the following ways of learning did you find most helpful?

C If you were going to learn another language, which of the following ways of learning would you use?

D Think of the learners you are currently teaching: how do you think they would respond to the questionnaire?

The top ten preferences for each of the categories of response are set out in the following table.

TABLE.9.1. Top 10 learning strategy preferences of 44 'good' learners of English its a foreign language.

A	B	C	D
Learning by games	Reading newspapers	Talking to LI speakers	Learning by games
Learning by doing	Watching television	Pictures, films, video	Pictures, films, video
Watching television	Learning by doing	Learning by doing	Learning by doing

Going on excursions	Talking to friends	Talking to friends	Having a coursebook
Pictures, films, video	Practising out of class	Practising out of class	Small group work
Reading newspapers	Talking to LI speakers	Watching television	Using cassettes
Small group work	Going on excursions	Small group work	Going on excursions
In class conversation	Small group work	In class conversation	Learning by hearing
Talking about interests	In class conversation	Having a coursebook	In class conversation
Talking to friends	Pictures, films, video	Learning by hearing	Talking about interests

Spearman correlations were calculated for the four variables. The highest correlation was between variables B and C (found most useful/would use next time). The lowest correlation was between variables B and D (found most useful/my students would like).

During the investigation, subjects were asked to record what they found most helpful, and what they found least helpful in learning English as a foreign language. Here are some of their responses. While these were provided as free-form responses, I have classified them under several headings. Despite the different contexts and environments in which the learners learned, the responses are surprisingly homogeneous.

What did you find most helpful in learning another language?

1. *Form-focused activities*

- Constant drilling.
- When the teacher talked to the class clearly with correct pronunciation.

- When I had my own textbook and made notes from teacher explanations.

2. *Applying skills to communicative language use outside class*

- Contact with native speakers.

- The following helped me most: reading all kinds of printed materials; listening to native speakers through media - radio, television, cinema; writing: studying grammar books; receiving instruction from my mother who was head of the English department in a public school.

- In general: reading newspapers, magazines and books in English. Also, listening to the radio and television.

- When I had someone to practise with outside the classroom, at home to foreigners (native speakers).

- I listened to songs and sang songs myself and watched television, videos and movies: I read interesting novels, and read other media such as newspapers, magazines, advertisements, booklets, all for pleasure; visiting English-speaking countries where I could communicate with native speakers.

- Practising through conversations and using the media, especially television with subtitles and newspapers. You must have someone who is proficient in the language to speak with in order to learn the language sufficiently well.

- Social interactions (exposure and practice in the use of the language) at home and with friends.

- Language taught inside the classroom is not sufficient to make a person a competent speaker in the real world. Children still make mistakes as they follow the structure of their language or make inferences from known languages. In some cases, students are good at talking or story-telling but not good at written language work. I wonder whether the topics for **conversations** they make could be, starting points for syllabus development and the development of other language skills.

- The language environment, the fact that my family knew and used English, and the radio and television programmes in English all helped.

- The most useful things I found were practice with other students and exposure to the community using the language (i.e. the target community).

3. Communicative language use in school

- There was a rule in our high school that the only language to be used was English.

- Everyone spoke English during class and during outdoor activities (e.g. PE, gardening). I also read a lot of books from the library.

- Reading and proper modeling helped me much in learning another language. Furthermore, whenever rules were given, these were followed by illustrations and realia. To top it all, the exposure to media – both printed and visual, contributed a lot to my learning of the second language.

- Guidance from the teacher and interactional practice with other students.

- In general, these helped most: literature (storybooks/story-telling sessions at an early age and self-access reading later on); when it is used as the medium of instruction in all subjects (unconscious[sic] learning); media

4. Affective factors

- Motivation. I find that motivation is vital to the success of learning a foreign language. I learned Japanese in the university because I had a very close friend who was Japanese. I was also fascinated with the Japanese culture and people in general. So I found it such a thrill to learn the language and to be able to communicate with my Japanese friend in his own tongue. Although most of our conversations were in English, those times when we spoke in Japanese were helpful. Motivation and the opportunity to use the language are the two most helpful elements in my learning experience.

- In general, linking the language was most helpful.

- Strong interest, sheer determination and motivation to learn a second language.

- I think it is necessary to integrate all four skills in teaching a language. Our basic senses – sight, smell, sound, touch and taste – should be stimulated too when we learn a language. This will make the learning experience a very personal one and we will not feel somewhat detached from the language. Most of time it is reading ink marks from the book or worksheet – it is too ‘cognitive’. I feel it’s more exciting to touch something or taste something or see something besides ink marks and learn the language simultaneously. In that way, we can relate to the language in a more natural and ultimate way and we might remember new words/expressions better.

5. Factors relating to the teacher/teaching

- Resourceful teachers who provide interesting ideas and useful background and explanations to, for example, a literature text.

What did you find least helpful learning another language?

1. form-focused activities

- Reading from textbooks.
- Grammar lessons during class.
- Enumerating rules of the language and memorising such rules did no: help-it only resulted in parroting.
- Language notes from the teacher about grammar, lists of words, reading aloud, one by one around the class.
- Memorising verb patterns, words and conversations.
- Doing grammar exercises; boring and monotonous classwork/activities.

2. Learning mode

- Learning by myself.

3. Factors relating to the teacher/teaching

- I would say ‘teacher’s talk’. Looking back, I wish he had given me more opportunities to use the language in class, especially speaking it in and outside the classroom. It did help to have him explain everything to us. But it would have been more fun and meaningful had we been given the chance to use the language in more creative ways. Come to think of it. It would have been more fun and challenging if I was thrown into the deep end!

- Negative criticism (oral) and punishment for wrong answers; dull teachers who do not encourage creativity or who are inactive/cannot be heard clearly.

The most striking thing about this study was the fact that, despite the diverse contexts and environments in which the subjects learned English, practically all agreed that formal classroom instruction was insufficient. Motivation, a preparedness to take risks, and the determination to apply their developing language skills outside the classroom characterized most of the responses from these ‘good’ language learners (see Beebe 1983 for an interesting study on risk-taking). The free-form responses reinforced the general pattern of responses provided by the questionnaire. Given these responses, I believe that it is premature to reject the notion that there is no correlation between certain learning strategy preferences and the ‘good’ language learner.

In a follow-up study, a group of advanced second language learners were asked to nominate the things which helped them most and least in learning English. Similar results to those from the foreign language subject were obtained. These are set out below, the items being rank ordered from most to least frequently nominated.

Things that helped most

1. Conversation with English speakers/in groups
2. Finding opportunities to practise outside class
3. Accessing media-radio, television, newspapers
4. Formal classes/learning with a teacher

5. Motivation
6. Reading
7. Grammar rules/drills
- 8. Listening**
9. Pronunciation
10. Vocabulary

Things that helped least

1. Learning grammar/drills
2. Lack of opportunity to use English outside class
3. Poor teaching
4. Being criticised/punished
5. Practising with L₂ speakers/poor L₁ speakers
6. Classes too big/too many levels
7. Use L₁ too much
8. Accessing media
9. Fear of making mistakes
10. Lack of motivation
11. Childish materials, e.g. picture books
12. Lack of audio-visual facilities
13. Rigid timetables and programmes
14. Reading aloud in classroom
15. Memorizing
16. No time to study
17. Writing

Despite the range of responses, there was a large measure of agreement about what helped/did not help these subjects to master a second language. Conversation practice inside and outside the classroom, and opportunities for activating English outside class were by far the most frequently nominated things which facilitated development. Least helpful were grammar drills, these

being nominated over twice as often as the next item, lack of opportunity to activate language use outside class.

Data such as these need to be interpreted carefully. For example, they do not mean that we should abandon the teaching of grammar. However, we may need to think again about how we go about teaching it: we need to be more explicit in showing learners how grammar instruction relates to the achievement of communicative objectives, and we need to incorporate into our teaching some of the strategies and techniques. Findings relating to the limitations of classroom work are more compelling. The data reinforce the desirability of encouraging learners to activate their L₂ outside the classroom, and there are numerous ways that this can be achieved, from setting homework to encouraging learners to keep diaries and journals. The foreign language subjects who took part in the study 1 have just described had many different practical suggestions for practising outside the classroom, and nominated a wide range of activities including the following:

1. Buy a copy of an English language newspaper. Locate the classified advertisements. Find a car/bike/television/washing machine, etc. which would be suitable for you. Say why it is suitable.

2. Listen to English language news and weather broadcast on the radio, find out how many separate items there are. What is the forecast maximum temperature for tomorrow?

3. Go into hotel where English is spoken. Find out the cost of rooms and the availability of facilities.

4. Go into an international airline office. Enquire about the economy/business first class fares to various places.

5. Go to a bank and fill out an application for a credit card.

6. Visit foreign embassies and make enquiries from the educational, trade and cultural representatives.

7. Go to an American Express office and fill out an application for a card.

S. Look in the telephone book and find the name, address and telephone number of an English language school, the British Council, etc. Call and enquire about English classes.

9. Buy a newspaper and find the employment section. Find all the jobs you would like. How much do they pay? Are they full-time or part-time, permanent or casual?

Here are some additional suggestions from a second language context.

1. Look in your local paper for the restaurant guide. On Saturday evening you want to go with a friend to a restaurant. Your friend likes *seafood*. You want a restaurant with a view. It should not be too *expensive*. You want to pay with a credit card.

Look in the Yellow Pages. Find two seafood restaurants, two licensed restaurants and two restaurants which are open seven days a week.

2 a) Get a map of the city from the tourist bureau. Find where you live. Find where you learn English. Trace the route from your home to school.

b) Look in a street directory. Use the index to find the page where you live. Now find the spot on the page where you live.

c) Write an invitation to a party at your place. Describe how to get there from the city centre.

3 Think about a place you would like to rent. *What suburb is it in? How many bedrooms has it got? Is it a house, or semi or a unit or a townhouse? How much per week is it?* Buy a newspaper. Find in the 'Rent' section the classified advertisements. Find a place you would like to rent.

Look in the Yellow Pages. Find some real estate agents. Call two or three agents. Ask: *Have you got a house/townhouse/flat/ semi in [suburb] to rent?*

If the answer is 'no' —»say 'thank you. Hang up.

If the answer is 'yes' —» ask *'How many bedrooms?'*

'How much is the rent?'

'Thank you.'

Hang up.

Imagine you have \$1.000.000 to spend. What house would you buy? Look in the newspaper and put a circle around the places you would like to see. Bring the newspaper to school and discuss it with the teacher and the other students.

4. Buy a television programme or find a programme in the newspaper. Put a circle around all the programmes you like.

Watch tonight's television news or listen to the radio. How many news items were there? What were they about? (Tick the columns.)

politics		people		sport		money
----------	--	--------	--	-------	--	-------

Give details of one of the news items.

5. Organise a class party. Make a list of till the things you need to buy. Write invitations to a friend, or sonic friends (e.g. someone in another class) to the party. Don't forget to include the following information:

- the address
- the date
- the time of the party
- the reason for the party

6. Look in the telephone book. Find the address and telephone number of a Medicare office near where you live. Find the name and telephone number of two private health insurance funds. Ring Medicare and the health insurance funds and ask:

What hours are you open on weekdays?

Are you open on Saturday?

Who is your local doctor?

What are the clinic's hours? (When is it open?)

What is the 'phone number of the surgery?

Who is your local dentist?

What are the surgery hours?

Collect some empty medicine bottles and containers. Bring them along to class to discuss with your teacher.

7. Find the entertainment section of the newspaper. Find liner things you would like to do and write them down. Tell a friend about these things.

Look in the telephone book. Find the page which says: 'Dial it Services'. Find the number for 'What's on in Sydney [or your city]'. Dial the number. What's on? How many different items did you hear? Write down one thing you hear.

III. LEARNER MOTIVATION AND INTEREST IN LANGUAGE LEARNING

3.1. Motivation: Some background thinking. Motivation in foreign language learning

We are now in a position to present a definition of motivation, which is essentially cognitive, but fits within a social constructivist framework.

Motivation may be construed as

- a state of cognitive and emotional arousal,
- which leads to a conscious decision to act. and
- which gives use to it period of sustained intellectual and/or

physical effort

- in order to attain a previously set goal (or goals).

A number of points arise from this definition. To start with, people are aroused in some way. This may involve the element of *desire*, but not necessarily. The initial arousal may be triggered by different causes, perhaps arterial ones such as interest or curiosity, or often by external influences such as another person or event. Whatever the cause, the person's interest or enthusiasm is activated, leading them to make a conscious decision to act in certain ways in order to achieve a particular goal (or goals) related to the activity undertaken. As we shall see later, these goals may reside within the activity itself, or the activity may be undertaken because it is a means to other ends. Once the activity has begun, the individual needs to sustain the effort that needed to achieve the goal; in other words, to persist. All this is influenced by the context and situation, and will be personal to the individual¹¹.

It is clear from this that motivation occurs as a result of a combination of different influences. Some of those are internal, that is

¹¹ Berlyne D.E. 1960. Conflict, Arousal and Curiosity. New York: McGraw Hill.

the come from inside the learner, such as an interest in the activity or a wish to succeed. Others are external, for example, the influence of other people. This internal-external distinctions is on that has played a significant part in many current theories of motivation. However, it would a mistake to consider motivation simplistically as something which is either internal or external to the individual as these cannot by easily separated. What we need to know is what external influences are more likely to arouse people's thoughts and emotions, and how they make their own sense of these, or internalize them in ways that lead them to decide to achieve certain goals¹².

A model of motivation

In trying to make sense of the literature on motivation, we have round it helpful to distinguish stages. First, there are reasons for undertaking a particular activity. As discussed above, these will probably involve a mixture of internal and external influences which will be personal to different individuals, who will make their own sense of the various events surrounding them. Second, we consider what is actually involved in deciding to do something: what makes people choose to embark on a particular task and to invest time and energy in it. An individual may have strong reasons for doing, something, but not actually decide to do it. Third, people need to sustain the effort required to complete the activity to their own satisfaction. This will, of course, take place within a social context and culture which will influence choices made at each stage¹³.

It is important to emphasise here that motivation is more than simply arousing interest. It also involves sustaining that interest and investing time and energy into putting in the necessary effort to achieve certain goals. We make this point because so often, from a teacher's point of view, motivation is seen as simply sparking an initial interest, for example, presenting an

¹² Hunt J. McV. 1965. Intrinsic motivation and its role in psychological development. Nebraska Symposium on Motivation.

¹³ Hebb D.O. 1959. The organization of behavior. New York: Wiley.

interesting language activity. However, motivating learners entails far more than this.

In simple terms, the first two stages of our model may be seen as more concerned with *initiating motivation* while the last stage involves *sustaining motivation*. Although it is convenient to discuss these in this way as a linear model, it is of course non-linear. For example, reasons for doing something will affect persistence, the very act of sustaining effort can give rise to further reasons for action. Thus, it is more realistic to perceive the relationship¹⁴.

In discussing the literature on motivation it is impossible to fit each theoretical perspective neatly into one or other of these components. Some theories encompass one or two, and some involve all three. In the next part of this chapter, therefore, we shall discuss a number of different perspectives on motivation and attempt to relate them back to this model. We divide this into six sections. We shall first consider the difference between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. We then discuss the importance of the perceived value of the activity to the learner. This is followed by a consideration of what is meant by arousal. We then discuss a number of theories that are mainly concerned with factors which are internal to the learner. These include locus of control, locus of causality, effectiveness motivation and motivational style. This is followed by a discussion of goal-setting, before we finally consider the role of other people in motivation.

Motivation in foreign language learning

There is no question that learning a foreign language is different to learning other subjects, mainly because of the social nature of such a venture. Language, after all, belongs to a person's whole social being, it is a part of one's identity, and is used to convey this identity to other people. The learning of a foreign language involves far more than simply

¹⁴ Keely G. 1955. *The Psychology of personal constructs*. New York: Norton.

learning skill, or a system of rules, or a grammar; it involves an alteration in self-image, the adoption of new social and cultural behaviours and ways of being, and pact on the social nature of the learner. As Crookall and Oxford (1988: 136) aptly claim, 'Learning a second language is ultimately learning to be another social person.' Similarly, Gardner states that:

Language are unlike outer subject taught in a classroom in that they involve the acquisition of skills and behaviour patterns which are characteristic of another community.

Consequently, he argues, success in learning a foreign language will be influenced particularly by attitudes towards the community of speakers of that language.

It is for these reasons that the Social Psychology of Language has developed into an important discipline in its own right, mainly due to the work of sociolinguists such as Howard Giles. The whole held of language is intricately involved with communicating with other people, with social relations between individuals and groups of people, and with social norms, of behaviour. It is clear that language learning will also be affected by the whole social situation, context and culture in which the learning takes place. It is not surprising, therefore, to find that a number of models of language learning are social-psychological in nature.

One of the most influential models from this school is Gardner's socio-educational model learner's of language learning (Gardner 1985). This model incorporates the learner's cultural beliefs, their attitudes towards the learning situation, their integrativeness and their motivation. Gardner emphasises that the primary factor in the model is motivation. He defines motivation as referring to a combination of effort plus desire to achieve the goal of learning the language plus favourable attitudes towards learning the language. Other factors, such as attitude towards the learning situation and integrativeness can influence these: attributes.

Motivation is operationally defined by Gardner and his associates in a slightly different way for the purpose of measurement, as consisting of desire to learn the language, motivational intensity, and attitudes towards learning the language. These are measured by the Attitude/Motivation Test Battery or AMTB (Gardner 1985:177-84). This consists of a series of self-report questionnaires containing a battery of questions to measure 19 different subscales which represent different aspects of motivation. Gardner stresses that there is not one Attitude/Motivation Test Battery, but that the items should be developed so that they are appropriate to the particular situation under investigation.

Some examples of items from four of the subscales of the AMTB are shown in figure 1. In this formulation of the AMTB, participants are asked to rank the statements on a scale ranging from strong agreement to strong disagreement. Following this, a number of indices are calculated, representing integrativeness, motivation, attitude towards the learning situation, and finally an overall, composite attitude/motivation index.

Gardner also makes the now well-known distinction between integrative and instrumental orientations in motivation. Orientation is not the same thing as motivation, but represents reasons for studying the language. An integrative orientation occurs when the learner is studying a language because of a wish to identify with the culture of speakers of that language. An instrumental orientation describes a group of factors concerned with motivation arising from external goals such as passing exams, financial rewards, furthering a career or gaining promotion.

It appears that an integrative orientation is one of the factors that
Interest in foreign languages

- If I were visiting a foreign country I would like to be able to speak the language of the people.

Attitudes towards learning French

- Learning French is really great
- I really enjoy learning French

Motivational intensity

- I really work hard to learn French.

• I make a point of trying to understand all the French I see and hear.

Desire to learn French

- To be honest, I really have little desire to learn French.
- I wish I were fluent in French.

Figure 1. *Attitude/Motivation Test Battery*

contributes towards *integrative motivation*. Ellis¹⁵ (1994:509-10) provides an explanation of what is meant by this term, something that has been unclear from previous literature. He also cites Gardner and MacIntyre's (1992) study where six variables were included in their measure of integrative motivation: attitudes towards French Canadians, interest in foreign language, integrative orientation, attitudes towards the learning situation, desire to learn French and attitudes towards learning French.

It was originally found that integrative motivation, correlates with higher achievement in the language, leading to the suggestion that this is a more important form of motivation. However, other studies have challenged this view. Many writers have also interpreted Gardner's work as implying that curative motivation is more important than instrumental; this does not, however, represent his position on his research findings (Gardner 1995, personal communication). It may be that while integrative motivation is more important in a second language context such as learning French in Canada or English in the USA, an instrumental orientation may be important in other situations

¹⁵ Ellis R. 1994. *The Study of Second Language Acquisition*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp 509-510

such as learning English in the Philippines (Gardner and Lambert 1972) or Bombay (Lukmani 1972), or in other texts where English functions more as a foreign language such as Japan (Niitsuma 1992). However, many studies have found that a number of other factors, such as confidence or friendship may be more important as motivating factors (Ellis 1994).

Gardner's socioeducational model has been highly influential in studies of motivation in foreign and second language learning. Recently, however, a number of writers, apparently thinking along similar lines, have called for a broadening of the theoretical perspective and research base to incorporate cognitive approaches to motivation in education¹⁶ (Dornyei 1994a and by Oxford 1994; Oxford and Shearin 1994; Crookes and Schmidt 1991). In responding to these pleas, it is interesting that Gardner and Thimbley (1994a and b) strongly claim that they have always maintained that motivation is a dynamic process where many other variables play a part, and that their model, far from being limiting, can accommodate such broader views.

The 1990s have, therefore, seen a welcome rekindling of interest in motivation in foreign and second language learning with many writers seeking alternative ways of conceptualizing motivation and setting new research agendas. This has also given rise to a lively debate between the writers cited above.

In a recent attempt to make sense of the different components involved in second language motivation, Dornyei (1994a) proposes a three-level categorisation, in Dornyei's model, the *language level* encompasses various orientations and motives related to aspects of the second language, such as the culture and the community, and the usefulness of the language. These will influence the goals learners set and the choices they

¹⁶ Dornyei 1994a and by Oxford 1994; Oxford and Shearin 1994; Crookes and Schmidt 1991)

make. Dornyei's *learner level* involves individual characteristics that the learner brings to the learning task. Key features of this level are need for achievement and self-confidence. Finally, the *situation level* includes components related to the course, the teacher and the group dynamics.

Dornyei's formulation is helpful as it highlights a point that we shall emphasise later in this chapter, that motivation is a multifaceted construct which will be affected by situational factors. It also stresses the importance of what the learner brings to the task of learning including cognitive aspects, which is the area we shall address next. Other researchers have attempted to incorporate more cognitive aspects of motivation into their theorising in different ways.

3.3. Aspects of learner motivation

The abstract term 'motivation' on its own is rather difficult to define. It is easier and more useful to think in terms of the 'motivated' learner: one who is willing or even eager to invest effort in learning activities and to progress. Learner motivation makes teaching and learning immeasurably easier and more pleasant, as well as more productive: hence the importance of the topic for teachers.

To stimulate your own thinking in anticipation, try answering the following questions.

Aspects of learner motivation

1. How important do you think motivation is for success in language learning, compared to, for example, language aptitude?
2. How important is people's past success in language learning for their motivation to learn in the present and future?
3. What characteristics and behaviours do you associate with the image of a motivated learner?

4. Some people are motivated by wanting to integrate into the target-language culture ('integrative motivation'), some by needing the language for their career or other personal advantages ('instrument motivation'). Which of the two would you imagine to be the stringer motive, on the whole?

5. The urge to engage in learning activity for its own sake (intrinsic motivation) is distinguishable from the urge to learn for the sake of some external reward (extrinsic motivation) Do you think there is any difference between children and adults in the degree of influence of these two kinds of motivation?

The importance of motivation

Various studies have found that motivation is very strongly related to¹⁷ achievement in language learning (e.g. Gardner and Lambert, 1972; Gardner, 1980)¹⁸. The question then needs to be asked: which is the cause and which the result? In other words, does success in language learning breed its own motivation (Burstall et al., 1974; Khan, 1991)¹⁹ or does previous motivation lead to success? Or both? Another question for which there is no conclusive research-based evidence is whether motivation is more, or less, important than a natural aptitude for learning (language), though at least one well-known study (Naiman et al., 1978)²⁰ tends towards the claim that motivation is ultimately more important (see below).

The significant message or research in this area for teachers is the shorn importance or the factor of learner motivation in successful language learning. Other questions raised in the above paragraph are arguably academic. The uncertainty as to which comes first, motivation

¹⁷ Gardner R. and Lambert. 1972. Attitudes and Motivation in Second language learning. Rowley, Mass.: Newbury House.

¹⁸ Gardner R. 1980. Language learning.

¹⁹ Khan J. Ideas and issues in Primary ELT, London, 1991.

²⁰ Naiman N. 1978. The good language learner. Toronto: Ontario Institute for studies in Education.

or success, does not entail any particular problems for teaching: it simply means that among other things we do to increase our students' motivation, strategies to increase the likelihood or success in learning activities should have high priority. And as to the question whether motivation is more or less important than language aptitude: motivation is not measurable, and even language aptitude is apparently much more difficult to assess than was once thought, so that the question is probably unanswerable. In any case, perhaps it was not a very helpful one in the first place: our job is to do all we can to encourage the development of ability and enhance motivation on the understanding that each will contribute to the other.

Characteristics of motivated learners

The authors of a classic study of successful language learning (Naiman et al., 1978) came to the conclusion that the most successful learners are not necessarily those to whom a language come very easily; they are those who display certain typical characteristics, most of them clearly associated with motivation. Some of these are:

1. *Positive task orientation.* The learner is willing to tackle tasks and challenges, and has confidence in his or her success.

2. *Ego-involvement.* The learner finds it important to succeed in learn: order to maintain and promote his or her own (positive) self-image.

3. *Need for achievement.* The learner has a need to achieve, to overcome difficulties and succeed in what he or she sets out to do.

4. *High aspirations.* The learner is ambitious, goes for demanding challenges, high proficiency, top grades.

5. *Goal orientation.* The learner is very aware of the goals of learning, specific learning activities, and directs his or her efforts towards achieving them.

6. *Perseverance*. The learner consistently invests a high level of effort in learning, and is not discouraged by setbacks or apparent lack of progress.

7. *Tolerance of ambiguity*. The learner is not disturbed or frustrated by situations involving a temporary lack of understanding or confusion: he or she can live with these patiently, in the confidence that understanding will come later.

Various other personality traits have been studied, such as field-dependence or independence, empathy, introversion or extraversion, but results have been less conclusive.

The teacher's responsibility

In an article written some years ago, Guard (1977) emphasized that it is an important part of the teacher's job to motivate learners. In more recent 'learner centred' approaches to language teaching, however, the teacher's function is seen mainly as a provider of materials and conditions for learning, while the learner takes responsibility for his or her own motivation and performance.

Which of these approaches is nearer your own? Your answer may depend to some extent on your own teaching situation: classes composed of highly motivated adult immigrants learning the target language for purposes of survival in a new country may only need you as a provider and organizer of learning activities and texts; whereas schoolchildren learning a foreign language may only learn well if you find a way to activate and encourage their desire to invest effort in the learning activity.

One way of studying the question of the contribution of teachers to learner motivation is through the following task.

Task:

Reflecting on the characteristics of a good teacher

Stage 1: Recall

Think back to your own classroom learning, as either child or adult, not necessarily of a foreign language, and try to recall a teacher of yours who was outstandingly good, from whom you really learnt well. (I am deliberately refraining from defining further what I mean by a 'good' teacher - interpret the term as **you** understand it.)

Stage 2: Writing

Write down, possibly in note form, as complete a description as you can of how this teacher functioned, within the classroom and outside it.

Stage 3: Reflection

Reading through what you have written, consider:

1. How much effort this teacher put in to motivating you to learn, whether deliberately or not, and:

2. How far your positive assessment of this teacher is based on the way he or she managed to motivate you.

If you are working in a group, share your accounts of your good teacher with others, and discuss the questions with them.

Extrinsic motivation

Extrinsic motivation is that which derives from the influence of some kind of external incentive, as distinct from the wish to learn for its own sake or interest in tasks. Many sources of extrinsic motivation are inaccessible to the influence of the teacher: for example, the desire of students to please some other authority figure such as parents, their wish to succeed in an external exam, or peer-group influences. However, other sources are certainly affected by teacher action. Here are some of them.

Success and its rewards

This is perhaps the single most important feature in raising extrinsic motivation. Learners who have succeeded in past tasks will be more willing to engage with the next one, more confident in their chances of succeeding, and more likely to persevere in their efforts.

It is important to note that 'success' in this context is not necessarily the same as 'getting the answers right' - though sometimes it may be. Further criteria may be the sheer amount of language produced or understood, the investment of effort and care, the degree of progress since a previous performance. All these need to be recognized by the teacher as 'successes' for which the learner can and should take credit.

The teacher's most important function here is simply to make sure that learners are aware of their own success: the message can be conveyed by a nod, a tick, even significant lack of response. But a sense of pride and satisfaction may of course be enhanced by explicit praise or approval, or by its expression in quantitative grades - particularly for young, inexperienced or unconfident learners. The only potential problem with these explicit markers of success is the danger that if over-used learners may become dependent on them: they may lose confidence in their ability to recognize success on their own, and see lack of teacher approval as casting doubt on it, or even as disapproval.

The key, then, is the learners' own awareness of successful performance, however this is attained: the more confident they become

and the more able to recognize such success on their own, the less they will need explicit support from someone else.

Authoritative demands

Learners are often motivated by teacher pressure: they may be willing to invest effort in tasks simply because you have told them to, recognizing your authority and right to make this demand, and trusting your judgement. Younger learners on the whole need the exercise of such authority more, adults less: but even adults prefer to be faced with a clear demand such as 'I want you to do this assignment by Friday' than a low-key request like: 'Do what you can, and give it to me whenever you finish.'

Authoritative demands can be, of course, over-used or misused: if learners only do things because they are obeying commands, without any awareness of objectives and results or involvement in decisions, they are unlikely to develop personal responsibility for their own learning or long-term motivation to continue. On the other hand an over-emphasis on learner freedom and autonomy and corresponding lack of authoritative demand by the teacher can lead to noticeable lowering of effort and achievement, and often, paradoxically, to learner dissatisfaction. Teachers have, surely, a duty to use their authority to 'push' their students - particularly the younger ones - beyond what they might be willing to do on their own, towards what Vygotsky (1962)²¹ called their 'zone of proximal development' - the next stage in achievement - which can only be attained by a learner with the support and help of a teacher.

Tests

The motivating power of tests appears clear: learners who know they are going to be tested on specific material next week will normally be more motivated to study it carefully than if they had simply been

²¹ Vygotsky L.S. 1962. *Thought and language*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT.

told to learn it. Again, this is a useful incentive, provided there is not too much stress attached, and provided it is not used too often.

Competition

Learners will often be motivated to give of their best not for the sake of the learning itself but in order to beat their opponents in a competition.

Individual competition can be stressful for people who find losing humiliating, or are not very good at the language and therefore likely consistently to lose in contests based on (linguistic) knowledge; and if overused, it eventually affects negatively learners' willingness to cooperate and help each other. If, however, the competition is taken not too seriously, and if scores are at least partly a result of chance, so that anyone might win, positive motivational aspects are enhanced and stress lowered. Group contests tend on the whole to get better results than individual ones, in my experience: they are more enjoyable, less tense and equally motivating.

Summary discussion task

A recurring message in the above discussion has been the caution not to rely on any one of the methods too consistently or use it too often, since over-use of any one of them can lead to negative attitudes and harm long-term learning. Do you have any further reservations about any of them based, perhaps on negative experiences as learner or teacher? Are there others that you have positive experience of and have found particularly useful?

3.3. Intrinsic motivation and interest

Global intrinsic motivation the generalized desire to invest effort in the learning for its own sake - is largely rooted in the previous attitudes of the learners: whether they see the learning as worthwhile, whether they like the language and its cultural, political and ethnic associations. However, you can certainly help to foster these attitudes by

making it clear that you share them, or by giving further interesting and attractive information about the language and its background.

Such global motivation is important when the course is beginning', and as general underlying orientation during it; but for real-time classroom learning a more significant factor is whether the task in hand is seen as interesting. It is in the arousing of interest, perhaps, that teachers invest most effort, and get most immediate and noticeable pay-off in terms of learner motivation.

Task Finding ways of arousing learner interest

Stage 1: Brainstorm

How many ways of creating learner interest in doing a task can you think of? Either on your own or with colleagues, make as comprehensive a list as you can.

Stage 2: Extending

Note that you may have many of the same ideas perhaps expressed in different words; decide which terms you prefer and stick to them. Also, different ideas may overlap: for example, you may have both 'games' and 'puzzles', where puzzles are arguably one kind of game. This does not matter at all: we are, after all, simply trying to amass as many good ideas for teaching as possible, not attempting a scientific taxonomy of mutually exclusive categories.

Stage 3: Assessing

With your final list before you, think about or discuss: which of the items are used most and which least in a teaching situation you are familiar with? And can you single out those which are, in your opinion, under-exploited and you would like to try to use more yourself?

WAYS OF AROUSING INTEREST IN TASKS

1. Clear goals

Learners should be aware of the objectives of the task – both language-learn content. For example, a guessing-game may have the language-learning goal of practising questions, and the content goal of guessing answers.

2. Varied topics and tasks

Topics and tasks should be selected carefully to be as interesting as possible, but few single types can interest everyone, so there should be a wide range of different ones over time.

3. Visuals

It is important for learners to have something to look at that is eye-catching and relevant to the task in hand (see Wright and Haleem, 1991)

4. Tension and challenge: games

Game-like activities provide pleasurable tension and challenge through the process of attaining some ‘fun’ goal while limited by rules. The introduction of such rules (an arbitrary time limit, for example) can add spice almost any goal-oriented task.

5. Entertainment

Entertainment produces enjoyment, which in its turn adds motivation. Entertainment can be teacher-produced (jokes, stories, perhaps songs, dramatic presentations) or recorded (movies, video clips, television documentaries).

6. Play-acting

Role play and simulations that use the imagination and task learners out of themselves can be excellent; though some people are inhibited and may find such activities intimidating at first.

7. Information gap

A particularly interesting type of task is that based on the need to understand or transmit information – finding out what is in a partner's picture, for example. A variation on this is the opinion gap where participants exchange views on a given issue.

8. *Personalization*

Learners are more likely to be interested in tasks that have to do with them themselves: their own or each other's opinions, tastes, experiences, suggestion.

9. *Open-ended cues*

A cue which invites a number of possible responses is usually much more stimulating than one with only one right answer participants' contributions are unpredictable, and are more likely to be interesting, original or humorous.

Fluctuations in learner interest

The ideas for raising interest are useful as overall guidelines for the design of materials or tasks. You look at how learners' level of attention and interest fluctuates within the period of engagement with a task, and what might cause such fluctuations. Some temporary lowering in learner interest can be caused by factors beyond our control - the need of the learner to take a short break, for example, or external distractions - but there are also certain teacher behaviours which can quickly catch or lose learner interest, and it is important to be sensitive to their effect.

Teacher-associated fluctuations in interest are more obvious in classes of younger or less autonomous learners, but can be observed to some extent in all classes.

The following task invites you to study your own data on rises and falls in apparent learner motivation in a lesson; if you are unable to do the necessary observation yourself, then read on to the account of my own observation below.

Observation **Rises and falls in learner interest**

Task *Stage 1: Observation*

For this task you will need to observe one lesson. Place yourself somewhere where you have a good view of one or two particular students. Watch them carefully and notice fluctuations in their interest level; at the same time note what was going on in the classroom. I found this easiest to do by noting time, classroom event(s) and then ‘+ +’ for ‘high attention’, ‘- -’ for ‘very low attention’, or appropriate intermediate symbols. Your perception of when interest is rising or falling will be largely intuitive, but look particularly for the direction of the student’s gaze, slumping or erect body posture, alert or apathetic facial expression, physical activity that is, or is not, directed at the task in hand.

Stage 2: Summary and conclusions

When you have finished your observation, try to pinpoint some of the apparent causes of rises and falls in attention, and what you might learn from these for your own teaching. If others in your group have also done such an observation, you might find it interesting to compare notes.

Fluctuations in learner interest: Observation and reflections

I watched two Inns in the front row in my school. They were average, or slightly above-average students, but not outstandingly obedient or self-disciplined, below are slightly edited notes from the first half of the lesson I observed, followed by some of my reflections.

<i>ti me</i>	<i>Classroom events</i>	<i>Stud ent attention</i>
9. 03	<i>Teacher says what's planned for lesson, gives Instructions: take out books, page 1&</i>	++
9. 05	<i>Question and answer from book exercise, teacher eliciting answers from volunteers- other students answering- teacher correcting, explaining.</i>	--
9. 10	<i>Teacher explains pair work: ask each other questions about picture in book</i>	
9. 11	<i>Pair work under way; my students not doing it, chatting about something else in mother tongue</i>	
9. 12	<i>Teacher notices, brings students back on-task; they are now doing it at full concentration</i>	

9. 13	<i>Instructions for quick dictation-type test- the test given</i>	
9. 15	<i>Papers being collected</i>	
9. 16	<i>Teacher Introduces new topic- reads bit from book, while students follow</i>	
9. 17	<i>Individual students reading; others following</i>	
9. 20	<i>Teacher introduces comparison exercises; elicits examples of similarities/differences between two pictures in their textbook, writes on board</i>	
9. 23	<i>Teacher invites students to continue telling each other about similarities and differences In pairs. Most don't do it.</i>	

Some reflections

- On the whole, the teacher addressing the whole class got most people's attention; when she addressed individuals, others sometimes lost interest -particularly if she went into lengthy corrections and explanations or individual error. One possible explanation might be that the teacher's eye contact with individuals raises their attention;

extended lack of eye contact lowers it. Hence the importance of constant 'scanning' of the class?

- Blackboard writing on the whole held students' attention, particularly when she was writing something they had said themselves.

- When students had to read or write something down, they concentrated; when they only had to listen, they attended less. Perhaps both this point and the previous one have to do with activation of the visual channel: students who have something to look at attend better?

- Organizational activities (giving out and collecting papers, for example) were usually accompanied by a lowering of attention; such processes therefore need to be managed as quickly and efficiently as possible.

- Pair and group work sometimes produce a very high level of learner concentration and activity, but can also do exactly the opposite. A high degree of teacher sensitivity is needed here, together with very clear instructions, simple and well-structured tasks and careful monitoring.

Robert Gardner and his colleagues have carried out a program of research on the relationship between a learner's attitudes toward the second or foreign language and its community, and success in second language learning (Masgoret and Gardner 2003). As suggested above, it is difficult to know whether positive attitudes produce successful learning or successful learning engenders positive attitudes, or whether both are affected by other factors. Although the research cannot prove that positive attitudes and motivation cause success in learning, there is ample evidence that positive motivation is associated with a willingness to keep learning.

Motivation in second language learning is a complex phenomenon. It has been defined in terms of two factors: on the one hand, learners' communicative needs, and, on the other, their attitudes towards the second language community. If learners need to speak the second language in a wide range of social situations or to fulfil professional ambitions, they will perceive the communicative value of the second language and will therefore be motivated to acquire proficiency in it. Likewise, if learners have favourable attitudes towards the speakers of the language, they will desire more contact with them. Robert Gardner and Wallace Lambert (1972) coined the terms *instrumental motivation* (language learning for more immediate or practical goals) and *integrative motivation* (language learning for personal growth and cultural enrichment). Research has shown that these types of motivation are related to success in second language learning, but the distinction is not always as clear as it was in the research context in which the contrast was first described. In some learning environments, it is difficult to distinguish between these two types of orientation to the target language and its community. Furthermore, early research on motivation tended to conceptualize it as a stable characteristic of the learner. More recent work emphasizes the dynamic nature of motivation and tries to account for the changes that take place over time.

Zoltan Dornyei (2001a)²² developed a process-oriented model of motivation that consists of three phases. The first phase, ‘choice motivation’ refers to getting started and to setting goals, the second phase, ‘executive motivation’, is about carrying out the necessary tasks to maintain motivation, and the third phase, ‘motivation retrospection, refers to students’ appraisal of and reaction to their performance. An example of how one might cycle through these phases would be: a secondary school learner in Poland is excited about an upcoming trip to Spain and decides to take a Spanish course (choice motivation). After a few months of grammar lessons he becomes frustrated with the course, stops going to classes (executive motivation) and finally decides to drop the course. A week later a friend tells him about a great Spanish conversation course she is taking, and his ‘choice motivation’ is activated again. He decides to register in the conversation course and in just a few weeks he develops some basic Spanish conversational skills and a feeling of accomplishment. His satisfaction level is so positive (motivation retrospection) that he decides to enrol in a more advanced Spanish course when he returns from his trip to Spain.

In a book devoted to helping second language teachers generate and maintain learners’ motivation, Dornyei (2001b) proposes and describes concrete and innovative methods and techniques that can help teachers motivate learners throughout these three phases.

Motivation in the classroom

In a teacher’s mind, motivated students are usually those who participate actively in class, express interest in the subject matter, and study a great deal. Teachers also have more influence on these behaviours and the motivation they represent than on students’ reasons for studying the second language or their attitudes toward the language and its speakers. Teachers can make a positive contribution to students’ motivation to learn if classrooms are places that students enjoy coming to because the content is interesting and relevant to their age and level of ability, the

²² Dornyei Z. 2001. *Motivational Strategies in the language classroom*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

learning goals are challenging yet manageable and clear, and the atmosphere is supportive.

Although little research has directly investigated how pedagogy interacts with motivation in second language classrooms, considerable work has been done within the field-of educational psychology. In a review of some of this work 'Graham' Crookes and Richard Schmidt (1991) point to several areas where educational research has reported increased levels of motivation for students in relation to pedagogical practices. Included among these are:

Motivating students into the lesson At the opening stages of lessons (and within transitions)', it has been observed that remarks teachers make about forthcoming activities can lead to higher levels of interest on the part of the students.

Varying the activities, tasks, and materials Students are reassured by the existence of classroom routines they can depend on. However, lessons that always consist of the same routines, patterns, and formats have been shown to lead to a decrease in attention and an increase in boredom. Varying the activities, tasks, and materials can help to avoid this and increase students' interest levels.

Using co-operative rather than competitive goals Co-operative learning activities are those in which students must work together in order to complete a task or solve a problem. These techniques have been found to increase the self-confidence' of students, including weaker ones, because every participant in a co-operative task has an important role to play. Knowing that their team-mates are counting on them can increase students' motivation.

Cultural and age differences will determine the most appropriate way for teachers to motivate students. In some classrooms, students may thrive on competitive interaction, while in others, co-operative activities will be more successful.

Identity and ethnic group affiliation

Social factors at a more general level can affect motivation, attitudes, and language learning success. One such factor is the social dynamic or power relationship between the languages. For example, members of a minority group learning the language of a majority group may have different attitudes and motivation from those of majority group members learning a minority language. Even though it is impossible to predict the exact effect of such societal factors on second language learning, the fact that languages exist in social contexts cannot be overlooked when we seek to understand the variables that affect success in learning. Children as well as adults are sensitive to social dynamics and power relationships.

A good example of how relations of power in the social world affect interaction between second language learners and target language speakers comes from the work of Bonny Norton. Drawing from data collected in a longitudinal case study of the language learning experiences of immigrant and women in Canada, she argues that concepts such as instrumental and integrative motivation do not adequately capture the complex relations of power, identity and language learning. Instead, she uses the term ‘investment’ to ‘capture the relationship of the language learner [and his/her identity] to the changing social world.’ (Norton Peirce 1995: 10). All the participants in her study were highly motivated to learn English. However, there were social situations in which they were reluctant to speak and these were typically ones in which there was a power imbalance. Their experiences in those situations limited the opportunities they had to practise and to continue to develop the second language outside the classroom.

Kelleen Toohey (2000) observed that immigrant children in English-medium kindergarten classes were quickly assigned identities such as successful/unsuccessful, big/small, talkative/quiet, etc., in their first year of school. Of course, they also had the identity of ‘being ESL’. Because learners’ identities impact on what they can do and how they can participate in classrooms, this naturally affects how much they can

learn. For example, one of the learners was consistently excluded from imaginative interactive activities with her peers; another learner was perceived as someone who never listened or did the 'right thing'. Toohey argues that these identities could eventually lead to their isolation and to restricted or less powerful participation in their classroom community. While Toohey is careful to point out that identities are not static and can change over time, it is equally important to keep in mind that 'classrooms are organized to provide occasions upon which some children look more and some less able, and judgements are made which become social facts about individual children'.

Elizabeth Gattbonton, Pavel Trofimovich, and Michael Magid (2005) found a complex relationship between feelings of ethnic affiliation and second language learners' mastery of pronunciation. Among other things, they found that learners who had achieved a high degree of accuracy in pronouncing the second language were sometimes perceived as being less loyal to their ethnic group than those whose second language speech retained a strong 'foreign accent'. Such perceptions can affect learners' desire to master the second language, especially in contexts where there are conflicts between groups or where power relationships imply a threat to one group's identity.

V. CONCLUSION

"I'm just not in the mood!"

How many times over a day do you say these words? How difficult do you find it to motivate yourself for assignments and tests?

Now, read the suggestions provided by about how I manage, to maintain my motivation in learning a language. As me read, underline the things you liked most and try to answer the questions about your learning process.

Suggestions:

When it comes to learning English, my personal motto has always been "excellence through passion" and "no pain, no gain". I've learned that passion, enthusiasm and commitment are vital. Moreover, if there is either no mental or physical pain, then there is no gain in life.

The key to being motivated all the time is to set small goals so that you build up confidence and stamina to take on bigger challenges. For example, I've learned so many words by promising myself to learn by heart at least 3 words a day for a month. Afterwards, I committed to learning 7 words a day for 3 weeks. Eventually, I had the courage and confidence to learn 10-15 words a day indefinitely. You've got to reward yourself after attaining these goals, for example by going out with friends the ability to work hard for a long time without getting tired. Or watching a movie or listening to your favorite song. Certainly, you could cheat and just have the motivation reward without actually getting your job done, but you won't feel good about your lack of effort. A reward is crucial for positive reinforcement and should motivate you to actually find the energy to put the ball in motion. You don't need to learn 20 or more words daily, however. The trick is that when you learn how to control yourself, you reach your goals and even exceed them. This helps not only in learning English but it also certainly helps you in achieving anything you want in life. The upside of using this technique is that once you reach your goal, no matter how small it is, you'll

certainly feel gratification from what you've accomplished. This, in turn, boosts your confidence level and massages the ego. The pride you'll feel once you *do* complete the task and knock it off your to-do list should be enough to get you motivated and keep you that way. Crucially, it would give you the confidence to take on and tackle every task in every sphere of life whether it is at work or at another class.

The other way to get motivated is to listen to your favourite English-language song or film in its original form, i.e. without translation. This way you'll naturally be motivated to clearly understand the film, music or whatever you find interesting or stimulating. One other way is to set a time frame. If you're the type that likes to plan ahead, mark your objective, with its corresponding time frame, on your calendar. Doing this a week or so in advance will help you get motivated as you will be setting a goal that you can look forward to accomplishing. On the other hand, if you're more spontaneous in nature, say to yourself that you are going to start working on your task now and give it a termination time - whether it's accomplished or not. During your studies however, eliminate all possible distractions that could lead to procrastination - turn off your cell phone and disable your internet at home. This will help you stay motivated as well, because you don't want to appear as a failure to your friends. Once your time frame has ended, just as in taking an exam, put your pencil down and walk away. The small window of time that you allot yourself to accomplish the task should naturally get enough adrenaline going to keep you motivated and give you the energy to make it happen. In many cases, you do need to reignite enthusiasm or to spark motivation from time to time. For example, do not study English two or more hours in a row, take a break or talk to your friends. So, shut off your computer and stop playing games, turn off the cell phone, spend the next two hours tackling your studies, and, to help you get motivated, call a friend or girlfriend and tell him that you're going to the cinema as soon as you're done. All said and done, I wish you all good luck, stay motivated and have fun! Remember, the hardest part is to get started.

*Try to use the above mentioned suggestions to help you maintain your motivation.
Create your own To Do List in order to help you in your language learning.*



APPENDIX 1

The contribution of the individual student to the learning process

SIMPLE FORMS

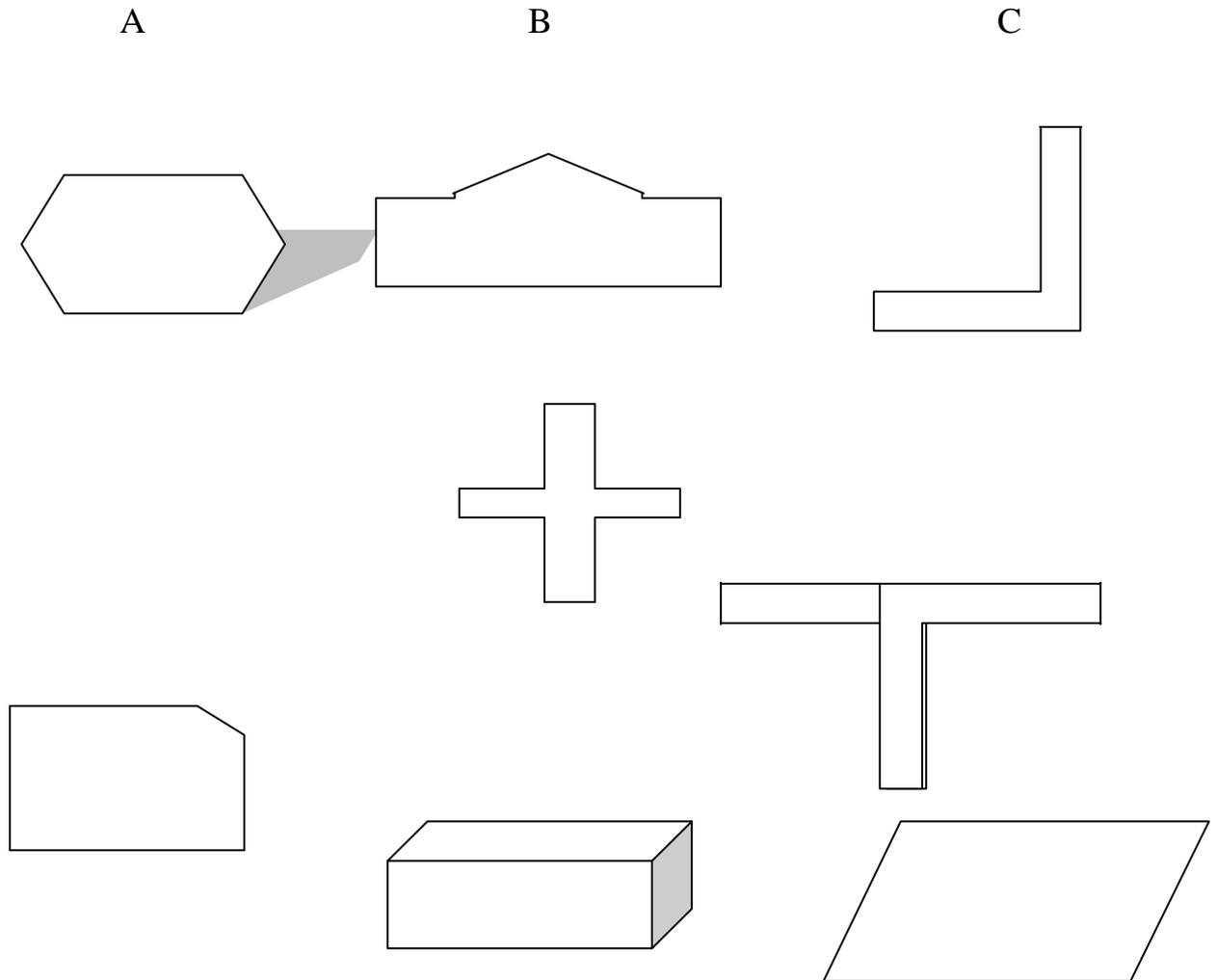
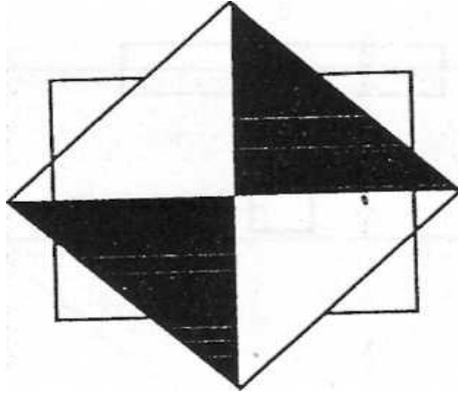


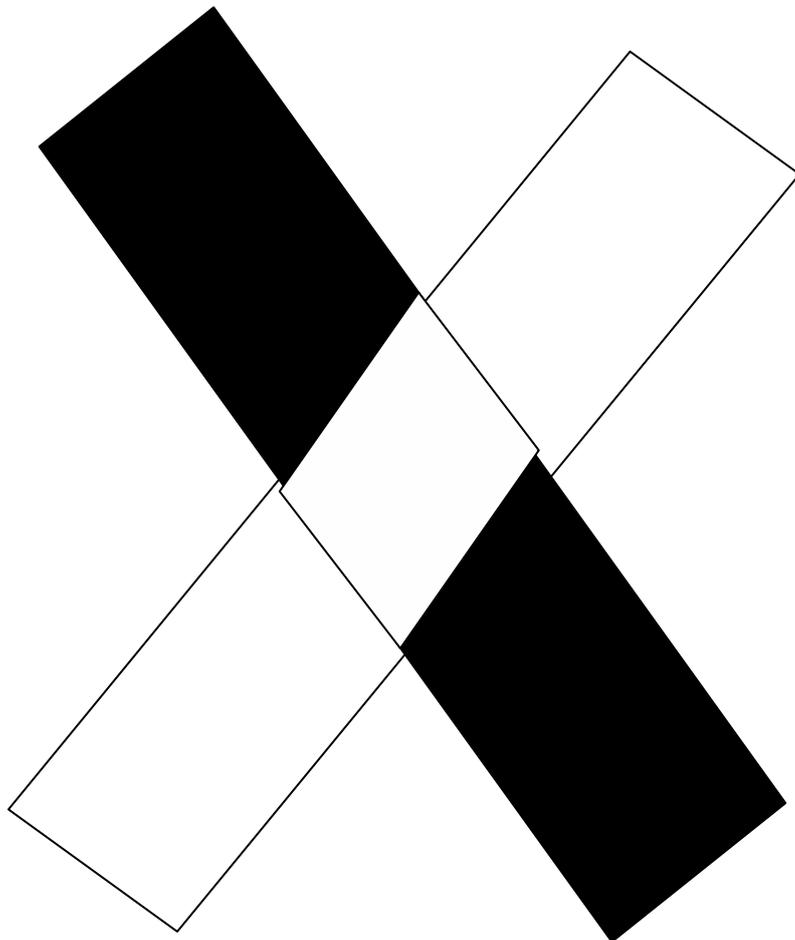
Figure 10 From Embedded Figures Test (Witkin, Oltman, Raskin and Karp 1971)

Appendix 2

Some problems with the notion of individual differences
SECOND SECTION



1 Find Simple Form "G"



2 Find Simple Form "A"

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