

CHAPTER TWO

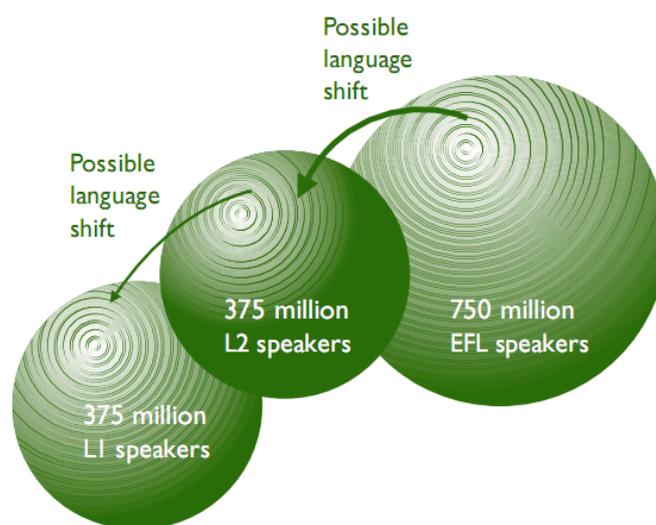
LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 IMPORTANCE OF ENGLISH AS COMMUNICATION LANGUAGE

It is undeniable that English is an important means of communication, especially in the era of globalization. The quality of higher education was one of the major issues raised in the World Conference on Higher Education organized by UNESCO in 1988 in Paris (Wang & Kim, 2000). In terms of English proficiency, TOEFL scores are one of the indicators to inform learners whether they are ready to study at graduate level. Most graduate schools in the West accept foreign students who have obtained a TOEFL score of at least 550.

According to Graddol (2000, p. 10), there are three kinds of English speaker: those who speak it as a first language, those for whom it is a second or additional language and those who learn it as a foreign language. Native speakers may feel the language 'belongs' to them, but it will be those who speak English as a second or foreign language who will determine its world future.

Figure 1. The three circles of English overlap making it easier to see how the 'centre of gravity' will shift towards L2 speakers at the start of the 21st century.



From: The future of English? (p.10) by D. Graddol, 2000. The British Council. The English Company (UK) Ltd.

For that reason we retain here the terminology of ‘first-language’ (L1), ‘second-language’ (L2) and ‘speaker of English as a foreign language’ (EFL). Figure 1 provides an alternative way of visualizing these three communities.

English, for non-native English speakers is second language acquisition. Second language acquisition is the process by which people learn a second language in addition to their native language(s) due to certain requirements or because of sheer interest. Learning a second language, especially in the formal classroom situation, is a hard task which requires a lot of effort, motivation, aptitude, and interpersonal skills.

2.2 INTERNAL FACTORS AFFECTING ENGLISH LEARNING

Internal factors represent our ignorance of what really happens inside the learner’s mind. Some of the important internal factors which affect English acquisition in non-native speakers are: age, aptitude, motivation, attitude, personality, learning style.

2.2.1 AGE

Table 1. Influence of Age on Second Language Acquisition

		LANGUAGE LEARNING SUCCESS	
		In L2 CONTEXTS	In FL CONTEXTS
RATE		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adults are faster Older children are faster than younger ones Decline in learning speed between 8 for pronunciation and 16 for grammar 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not-so-young children and adults are faster at grammar & pronunciation with formal instruction
FINAL ACHIEVEMENT		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The earlier the arrival the better L2 similarities with L1 increase success No connection with number of years spent in L2 country 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Less probabilities of success, though there are exceptions
DEVELOPMENTAL PATTERNS		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The same stages for children and adults, through different acquisition processes 	
AGE & OTHER FACTORS		(success is more probable if age is connected to other factors)	
INTERNAL TO LEARNER	ATTITUDE	(also applies to L2 ctxs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children benefit from memory, whereas adults benefit from analytical skills Effect stronger for FL ctxs.
	MOTIVATION	(also applies to L2 ctxs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Effect stronger for FL ctxs.
	SEX	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Girls are better, particularly if early arrivals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No effect found yet
EXTERNAL TO LEARNER	TEACHING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Formal teaching is recommended to avoid fossilization 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supra-segmental and segmental training Authentic input and phonological feedback Input enhancement techniques
	L1 LITERACY		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focus-on-form teaching Having developed L1 literacy skills

A number of studies have been done on the effects of age on second language acquisition. The studies conclude that adults have an initial advantage where rate of learning is concerned, particularly in grammar. They will eventually be overtaken by children who receive enough exposure to the L2. The results, however, do not complement when second language exposure happens in formal/instructional contexts.

2.2.2 APTITUDE

There has not been too much work done in this area due to the fact that aptitude is something quite difficult to alter. However, different authors have divided aptitude into different subdivisions. According to Carroll, 1991, it consists of four sub-components; phonetic coding ability, associative memory, grammatical sensitivity and inductive language analytic ability. However, according to Skehan (1998), components that contribute to aptitude development are auditory ability, linguistic ability, and memory ability. These components, as Table 2.2.2 shows, correlate strongly with language learning success.

Table 2. Three sub-components on aptitude (according to Skehan, 1998)

Aptitude factor	Stage	Operations
Phonemic coding ability	Input	Noticing
Language analytic ability	Central Processing	Pattern identification Generalization Restructuring Dual-code organization
Memory	Output	Retrieval -computed performance -exemplar-based perform.

Aptitude is a specific talent for language, which differs strongly from general intelligence: aptitude has a high correlation to language learning success, while intelligence does not.

Research shows that exceptional language learners might not be exceptional in two of three components which make up aptitude (phonemic coding ability and language analytic ability), but seem to ‘confine’ their exceptional nature to the third (memory). Very weak learners usually lack input skills.

2.2.3 MOTIVATION IN LEARNING ENGLISH

Motivation is perhaps the factor generally believed to have the greatest impact on success. It is usually defined “as a psychological trait which leads people to achieve some goal. In language learning, that goal may be mastery of the language or achievement of some lesser aim” (McDonough, 1998, pp. 219–220).

According to Gardner and Lambert, cited in Spolsky, (2000, p. 149), attitude is the source of motivation. Attitude can be measured by an individual in the way of evaluating an object. Gardner also defined that “Motivation in the present context refers to the combination of effort plus desire to achieve the goal of learning plus favorable attitudes towards learning the language” (Spolsky, 2000, p.149). Therefore, motivation is comprised of ‘orientation’, and ‘motivational intensity’;

2.2.3.1 Integrative Motivation: It has been identified as the learner's orientation with regard to the goal of learning a second language by Crookes and Schmidt (as cited in Jacqueline Norris-Holt, 2001). It is thought that students who are most successful when learning a target language are those who like the people that speak the language, admire the culture and have a desire to become familiar with or even integrate into the society in which the language is used (Falk, 1978). This form of motivation is known as integrative motivation. When someone becomes a resident in a new community that uses the target language in its social interactions, integrative motivation is a key component in assisting the learner to develop some level of proficiency in the language. It becomes a necessity in order to operate socially in the community and become one of its members.

2.2.3.2 Instrumental Motivation: In contrast to integrative motivation, this is the form of motivation referred to as instrumental motivation. This is generally characterised by the desire to obtain something practical or concrete from the study of a second language (Hudson 2000, as cited in Jacqueline Norris-Holt, 2001). With instrumental motivation the purpose of language acquisition is more utilitarian, such as meeting the requirements for school or university graduation, applying for a job, requesting higher pay based on language ability, reading technical material, translation work or achieving higher social status. Instrumental motivation is often characteristic of second language acquisition, where little or no social integration of

the learner into a community using the target language takes place, or in some instances is even desired.

Then, orientation provides reasons as to why a second language is learnt, while motivational intensity stands for the effort and persistence in the learning process.

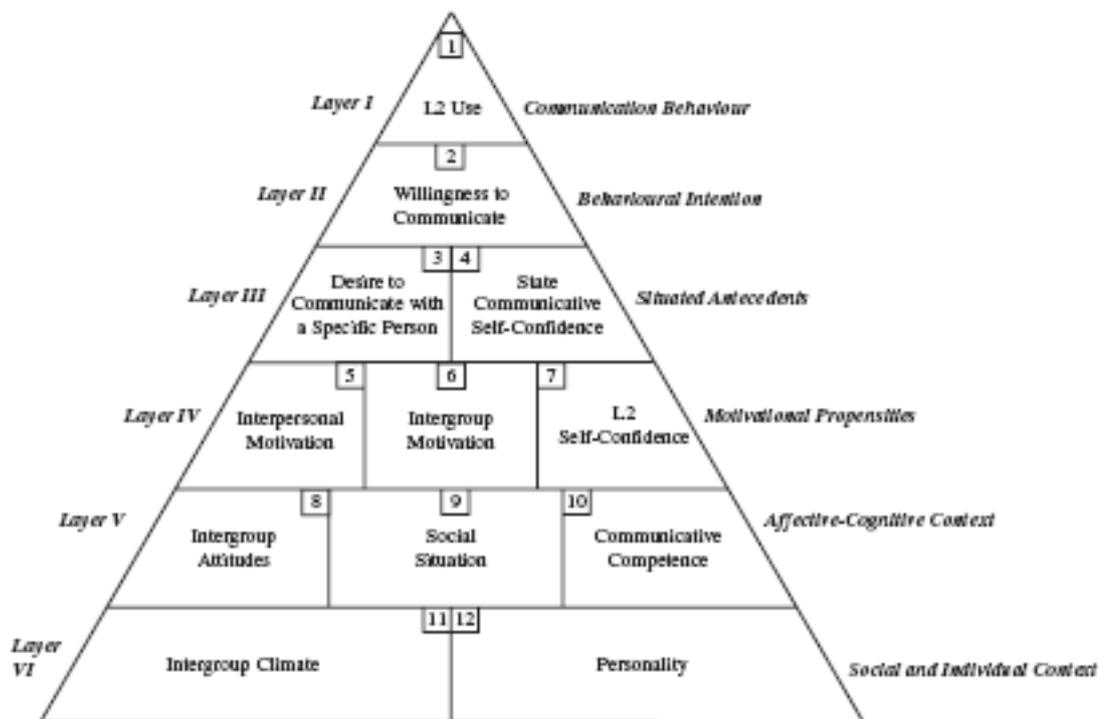
Falk J.(1978) showed that students who are most successful when learning a target language are those who like the people that speak the language, admire the culture and have a desire to become familiar with or even integrate into the society in which the language is used.

In a study conducted by Berwick and Ross (1989), a group of 90 first-year Japanese university students enrolled in an international commerce and a compulsory English course were examined to determine their degree and form of motivation. The students were found to possess motivation, with the underlying reason for studying English being the entrance exam requirements for university. However, upon entrance to the desired establishment the student's interest to continue study declined.

However, according to Dörnyei (2003, pp. 12-14), the motivation to learn a foreign or second language also involves the speaker's "willingness to communicate." Dörnyei stated that while willingness to communicate in the first language is inspired by the characteristic of the speakers themselves, the willingness to communicate in the second language is more complex depending on the level of second language (Dörnyei, 2003, p.12)

The variables of a learner influencing the willingness to communicate in the foreign or second language are shown in the following Pyramid:

Figure 2. Schematic representation of the variables influencing the willingness to communication by Dörnyei



According to the above theories, it can be proven that the reason that one decides to study another language is because of their survival needs. When a learner is in an environment or a society where English is commonly used, it is necessary for them to struggle and be more active in order to acquire the new language as rapidly as possible because this will also help the learner to survive, be able to interact with other people and finally become an acceptable member of such a community.

2.2.4 ATTITUDE

Attitude is a hypothetical construct that represents an individual's like or dislike for an item. People that simultaneously possess a positive and a negative attitude towards certain issues or thing are known as "ambivalent". It is one factor that causes success or failure for learners.

Chandrasegaran (1981) gave a definition of 'attitude' as emotions and thoughts relating to English language, to the learning of English, and to the culture of English speaking peoples.

Rubin & Thompson (1994) defined attitude as the important key that brings success or failure to learners. It may have to do with the way learners feel

about the foreign culture and its people. They may admire the culture and want to learn more about it by becoming fluent in the foreign language or they may like the people who speak the language and want to be accepted by them. There is a certain relationship between attitudes and success when English language learners have an opportunity to know people who speak English. These positive attitudes help learners maintain their interest long enough to achieve their goals. However, some learners can succeed in English without an interest in a country or its people. These learners may need the language for academic or career purposes, so they have a pragmatic attitude.

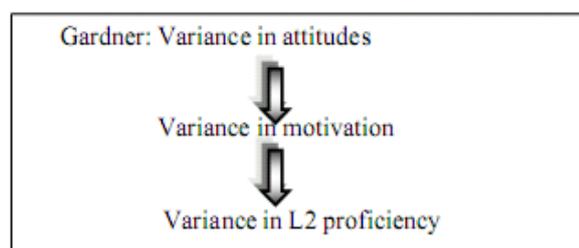
A study from Hendrickson (1997) found that motivation along with attitude were the best predictors of student grade point averages.

The researchers concluded that students with different types of learning styles, motivation, attitudes, and backgrounds learned equally well in Web-based courses.

Studies from Day, Raven, and Newman (1997) found that attitude towards particular type of learning does not affect learning styles and student achievement. A similar type of study by Ching-Chun Shih, Julia Gamon (2001) shows that students with difference in learning styles, motivation, attitudes, and backgrounds do not show difference in learning.

The attitude towards the specific group is the most important attitude; that is, the attitude learners have towards the members of the cultural group whose language they are leaning. Nevertheless, it is clearly evident that second language learners benefit from positive attitudes and that negative attitudes may lead to decreased motivation. Therefore, the teacher needs to be aware of positive and negative attitudes (Brown, 1987). Gardner and some other authors instead of considering attitude and motivation separately consider them together as Social-Psychological factors. The effect of Social-Psychological factors on second Language acquisition can be represented as in Figure 3.

Figure 3. Gardner's summary of Social-Psychological factors



2.2.5 PERSONALITY

Studies show that the major components of particular personality affect on acquiring second language are extroversion, anxiety, risk-taking, sensitivity to rejection, and empathy. Studies also show negative correlation between pronunciation and extroversion.

Extroversion does not lead to success in second language acquisition, but it may be a trait that encourages people to continue with their study, which in turn promotes second language acquisition. A higher risk taking behavior shows positive correlation with acquiring English proficiency skill. Some research studies indicate the nature of taking risk the willingness to guess, to appear foolish in order to communicate, relate with higher ability to second language acquisition.

Anxiety, sensitivity to rejection, an antithesis of risk-taking behavior, and empathy are not found to be directly related to second language acquiring skill. Table 3 shows the connection between various personality behaviors with second language acquisition success.

Table 3. Summary of personality behavior and their connection with SLA success

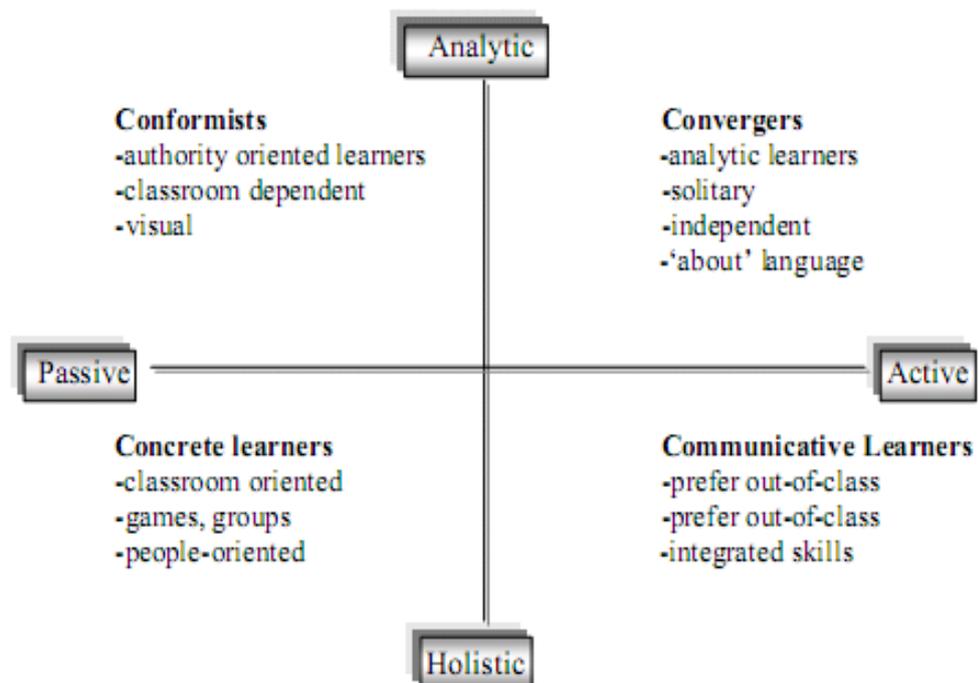
Personality variable	Definition	Connections with SLA success
Self-esteem	Feeling of self-worth of the individual Types: overall self-assessment / specific self-esteem / task self-esteem	
Extroversion-introversion	Extroverts are sociable, risk-taking, lively and active Introverts are quiet and prefer non-social activities	+++ connections with basic interpersonal skills + connections with reading and grammar skills
Risk-taking	Willingness to take risks	+ connections if moderate risk-taking behavior for testing hypothesis about language
Empathy	Ability to put oneself in another's place	
Inhibition	Extent to which individuals build defenses to protect their egos	
Tolerance of ambiguity	Ability to deal with ambiguous stimuli	+ connections with listening comprehension skills

Summary of personality variables and their connection with SLA success. A + indicates a weak correlation, whereas +++ shows very strong connections.

2.2.6 LEARNING STYLE

Learning style represents the preferred way in which individual process information or approach a particular task. It is a tendency, but those individuals favoring one style may switch to another in some circumstances. The four types of learners are presented in Figure 4.

Figure 4. Four types of Cognitive/Learning Style



Conformists and convergers are field dependent (FD) learners, while the other two are field independent (FID) learners. Studies show that FID learners generally have higher ability to acquire proficiency in second language than field dependent learners.

2.3 EXPOSURE TO ENGLISH AS FACTORS AFFECTING ENGLISH LEARNING

Exposure to the target language can bring success in learning a language. A study from Bialysok and Fohlch, cited in Chandasegaran (1981) showed that the model of second language learning identifies two types of linguistic knowledge, which are explicit and implicit.

Explicit linguistic knowledge refers to the rules and vocabulary consciously learnt, while implicit linguistic knowledge refers to the rules and other features of the language which are unconsciously absorbed. These can be implied in Krashen's model for adult second language learners.

According to Krashen, adults learn second language in two ways: they may 'acquire' it or they may 'learn' it. We acquire when we are involved in meaningful interaction in the second language, with no attention to form. On the other hand, we learn by a conscious process of study and attention to form and error correction, the same as in a formal language classroom. For Krashen, acquisition is a more important process. He believes that language acquisition is the only effective way to develop fluent communication (Lightbown & Spada, 1993, p. 27).

2.4 ACADEMIC WRITING PLACEMENT TEST (AWPT)

All students who are studying for a diploma or degree program at AIT are required to take the AIT Academic Writing Placement (AWP) Test when they first arrive on campus. You will not be allowed to enroll for any courses AIT unless you have taken the AWP Test.

The placement test consists of two tasks. The first is a description of data (75-100 words), and the second is an essay (250 - 350 words). These two tasks are scored on a nine point scale. (The scale is similar to the IELTS scores.) All students at AIT must attain a score of at least 6 out of 9 on the AWP Test.

2.4.1 AWPT SCORE AND INTERPRETATION

Students who receive an AWPT score of less than 6.0 are required to attend an EL writing course to improve their writing skill. Students who attend English classes are occasionally re-tested. Students need to continue attending EL courses until they score 6.0 or higher.

The writing score is an average of three sub-scores as follows:

- (a) Score for English structure and usage (grammar and vocabulary);
- (b) Score for coherence and cohesion (logical organization of ideas and use of linking words and phrases within and between paragraphs); and,
- (c) Score for task fulfillment (ability to describe data accurately and to produce an essay with a well-presented argument).

The minimum score for admission to AIT is 4.5, and the score that a student needs to receive in order to graduate is 6.0. Many students gain a score of 6.0 or higher on the placement Test. An explanation of the scores, an example of the test, and a description of the English courses provided by language center are provided in the appendix.