

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This study focuses on the factors affecting language learning. Therefore, literature and theories related to factors affecting English learning are reviewed and divided into two parts as follows:

- 2.1 Internal factors affecting language learning
- 2.2 External factors affecting language learning

2.1 INTERNAL FACTORS AFFECTING LANGUAGE LEARNING

In English learning, many internal factors influence learners' acquisition. However, this study focuses on only four main factors.

2.1.1 Learners' Attitudes Toward English

For the learners' attitudes towards English, Wall (1996) described that attitudes influence the learners' belief and desire about language learning because without a desire to learn, the learners are likely to put less effort to improving their second language. It means that if the learners like to study English, they are likely to have a good performance in English. In contrast, if the learners have negative attitudes towards the target language, they may not perform well in their language learning (Richard-Amato, 1996). Brown (1994) supported this idea by saying that no successful cognitive or affective activity can be carried out without belief in one's own capabilities. Therefore, learners' good attitudes can encourage language learning, and can develop self-esteem which leads to language learning achievement (Schumann, 1999). Knowing the attitudes of one person will give an idea or imply how the person particularly views, acts and has an opinion towards things, objects, events or phenomenon either in favorable or unfavorable ways. So that, for learning English, it will be beneficial for instructors to manage class activities that suit students' abilities. This may lead to greater contributions and success in learning.

2.1.2 Learners' Ability

According to Mcloughlin, 2003, ability can be divided into two notions: aptitude and skills or knowledge. Language aptitude is an "innate ability or knowledge that comes at birth" or "the individual's initial state of readiness and

capacity for learning a foreign language and probable facility in doing so” (Harley & Hart, 2002). Skills or knowledge refer to specific abilities that can be learned and acquired. He also showed that ability can be one of the key factors that can answer why learners cannot succeed in foreign language learning. Therefore, as far as learners have ability, they can learn any language learning contexts/ situations, and teachers and researchers have to take this into consideration.

2.1.3 Learners' Motivation

Motivation may be the salient key to predict whether learners will be successful in second language learning (Brown, 1994). Brown defines ‘motivation’ as an inner powerful drive that directs a person to do a particular action. Motivation also refers to a sense of interest or perception of value which can lead learners to success in language learning (Gray, 2003). Motivation can be divided into two types: intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation. Based on Gray, 2003, intrinsic motivation concerns learners’ interest or learners’ favorite to study a particular field such as English. On the other hand, extrinsic motivation comes from the desire to get a reward or to avoid punishment. The focus is on something external to learning activity itself. Gray, 2003, summarized that motivated language learners will be likely to learn whatever the subject matters are. In contrast, if lacking motivation, they will not learn a thing even if the subject matter is interesting.

2.1.4 Learners' Effort

In the educational context, effort involves the individual learner trying to succeed in learning, for example, studying hard, revising lessons, and regularly coming to class (McLoughlin, 2003). It is considered one of the important factors in language learning (Ellis, 1994). Ellis, 1994, also notes that effort is associated with intrinsic motivation, and it can lead to the target language’s achievement. The learners can learn effectively in any subject matter if they make sufficient effort. Adequate effort towards learning can lead to success, but insufficient effort can lead to failure in learning.

2.2 EXTERNAL FACTORS AFFECTING LANGUAGE LEARNING

2.2.1 Course Difficulty

According to Robinson (2001), courses are set up to promote cognition, i.e. thinking ability. Richard (2001) indicates that whether or not students can achieve such goals depends partly on the degree of course difficulty. If the course difficulty is much beyond the learners' ability, learners' thinking ability might not develop optimally. He also claims that to deal with a difficult course, learners would be required to have the ability to learn. Furthermore, if the learners are of low proficiency, they possibly cannot undertake a difficult course. On the other hand, if the students are highly proficient, they are likely to succeed in a difficult course.

2.2.2 Instructors

Based on Graith (2002), there are two aspects which are important to the learners' learning: the instructors' personality and teaching methods. The teacher's personality refers to the relationship between instructor and learners. For example, the instructors can be facilitators, with whom the students can discuss learning problems. Teaching methods are the ways instructors use to convey the knowledge to the learners such as learning tasks, checking learners' understanding, providing comprehensible explanations and giving the learners chances to ask questions (Head & Taylor, 1997). Therefore, qualified instructors are crucial for teaching and learning contexts. These two characteristics can create not only a good environment in the classroom, but also the learners' good attitudes towards learning (Graith, 2002).

According to this review of literature, this research was carried out to ascertain whether the following factors, i.e., learners' attitudes; learners' ability; learners' motivation; learners' efforts; course difficulty; and instructors, have a crucial effect on English learning.