

In people's life experiences, by observing themselves or others, people are more or less led to believe that each learner has some learning characteristics that influence or contribute to whether or not they will be successful in language learning(Candlin & Mercer, 2003,p.43). Patsy M. Lightbrown and Nina Spada given some very valuable information.

There is a great deal of variation in the acquisition of a first language, with some children being able to string together sentences of a few words at an early age and others only being able to speak simple words, but there is no doubt that all normal children will acquire their first language at some point. The situation is different in the case of second language acquisition. Through enough observations, it has been found that in the same classroom environment, some learners make rapid progress at the beginning of learning a new language, while others are very slow and even end up failing(Candlin & Mercer, 2003,p.45). Several factors influence the success of learners in second language learning, which can lead to such a wide range of individual differences. In this book, seven representative factors are listed: Intelligence, Aptitude, Personality, Motivation and Attitude, Learner preferences, Learner beliefs and Age of acquisition.

Intelligence, which many researchers use to predict a learner's academic achievement because of the influence of a person's intelligence on academic achievement, is also used by some researchers to predict a learner's achievement in language learning. However, because human intelligence is complex, not all students with high IQ scores will learn a second language well, or not all learners with high IQ scores will learn all aspects of a second language well(Candlin & Mercer, 2003,p.46). For example, some people may have superior intelligence in drawing but not perform well in language, or learners with high IQ scores do not have an advantage in language learning when the focus is on communication and interaction with people, but rather perform better in areas that require analysis and reasoning such as learning grammar rules.

Aptitude, people who learn quickly are considered to be gifted in some way. The same is substantially true for language learning, and this has been demonstrated by both the MLAT and PLAB tests(Candlin & Mercer, 2003,p.47). However, both tests are based on the grammar-translation and audiolingual methods, which do not work in the context of the communicative approach to teaching, so researchers have begun to suspect that there may not be a substantial link between aptitude and language learning(Candlin & Mercer, 2003,p.47). Moreover, each successful language learner relies on different abilities and it is unlikely that a successful learner will have all the abilities needed to learn a language at the same time(Candlin & Mercer, 2003,p.47). For example, some learners have a strong memory, which helps them to remember words and phrases, while others have strong analytical skills, which help them to translate and analyse grammar. It is therefore difficult to measure exactly which aptitude helps learners to be successful in second language learning.

Personality, in empirical studies, has not proved to be as easy to influence on second language learning as one might have presupposed. This is because, in second language learning, researchers have used different measures to test similar personality traits in learners, but the results have been very different(Candlin & Mercer, 2003,p.47). To date, no research has been able to definitively demonstrate the relationship between personality and second language

acquisition, and one important reason for this is that there are no valid methods to identify and measure personality(Candlin & Mercer, 2003,p.47). Furthermore, personality factors may only affect certain aspects of language learning, such as conversational skills rather than grammatical translation(Candlin & Mercer, 2003,p.48). In conclusion, many researchers believe that personality can have a significant impact on the success of language learning, but because of the complexity of this relationship, so it is difficult to judge. Therefore, a better way to assess is combined with other approaches.

Motivation and attitudes, In general, positive motivation and attitudes are associated with success in second language learning (Candlin & Mercer, quoted in Gardner,1985). Unfortunately, however, no studies have been able to measure the relationship between them(Candlin & Mercer, 2003,p.48). This makes it difficult to judge whether motivation influences learning achievement, or whether learning achievement facilitates motivation(Candlin & Mercer, quoted in Peter Skehan,1989), or possibly even both at the same time. Furthermore, motivation is complex and can come from the learner's own needs and interests as well as from outside influences, an important one being social dynamics and power relations and Robert Gardner and Wallace Lambert (1972)create the terms integrative motivation. In the classroom, teachers generally felt that students with positive attitudes were more likely to be engaged and motivated, so they envisaged that making the classroom a place that students would enjoy, where the objectives, content and activities were set at an appropriate level to their learning and where students felt both challenged and able to achieve, would help to motivate them(Candlin & Mercer, 2003,p.49).

Learner preferences, different students have different learning styles, for example, some students are visual or auditory or kinesthetic, but a great deal of research is now focused on field independence or field dependence(Candlin & Mercer, 2003,p.50). Since there is not much research examining the interaction between different learning styles and success in second language acquisition(Candlin & Mercer, 2003,p.50), the notion that one particular teaching method or material is suitable for the needs of all learners should be taken with a pinch of salt. That is, one particular teaching method cannot be used to teach all students. Moreover, it is not so much a matter of student ability sometimes, but rather that the teaching method is not appropriate for the individual student that he or she is not learning the second language as well as they should. However, when a learner's learning style is identified, the teacher can consciously guide him or her to find the appropriate teaching method or materials to help the learner learn the language(Candlin & Mercer, 2003,p.50).

Learner beliefs, although not every learner can identify their learning preferences, they still believe that there is a particular teaching style that is best for them based on their previous learning experiences or assumptions(Candlin & Mercer, 2003,p.50). However, few researchers have conducted in-depth research in this area. In practice, however, with in-depth communication teachers can use the information they receive from learners to help them expand their learning strategies and adapt their teaching styles(Candlin & Mercer, 2003,p.50).

age of acquisition, the critical period hypothesis suggests that biologically the brain tends to be successful in language learning at a certain point in human development(Candlin & Mercer,

2003,p.51). The critical period hypothesis is further supported in both the Mark Patkowski study (1980) and in the research of Jacqueline Johnson and Elizabeth Newport(1989), who found that for second language acquisition there is a critical period when the same level of native language acquisition can be achieved. However, Catherine Snow and Marian Hoefnagel-Höhle(1978) have come to the opposite conclusion through their research, showing that there is no critical period for language acquisition, although some scholars have argued that there are other explanations for their research, meaning that it is not entirely clear whether there is indeed no critical period(Candlin & Mercer, 2003,p.55). In general, the role of the critical period in second language acquisition is still subject to much debate, as the age of acquisition is not completely isolated from other factors.

To give a more concise view of the issues involved in each of these factors, I have summarised them in the table below for reference:

Factors	Research Methodology	Conclusions	Shortcomings and Deficiencies
Intelligence	IQ tests	An important factor in language analysis and responsible learning, but less so in communication and interaction	Due to the complexity of intelligence, traditional IQ tests are single-method that can not accurately measure the impact of intelligence on language learning
Aptitude	MLAT & PLAB	There is a substantial correlation between grammar translation or audiolingual methods, but with the use of communicative teaching methods the correlation is found to be less significant	A successful language learner relies on different abilities, and a successful learner unlikely have all the abilities needed to learn a language at the same time, so it is difficult to measure which aptitude help learners to succeed in second language learning
Personality	Empirical studies	1. different measures of similar personality traits in learners yield different conclusions 2. many researchers believe that personality can have a significant impact on the success of language learning	because of the complexity of this relationship, it is difficult to judge. Therefore, the better way to assess is combination with other approaches.
Motivation and Attitude	Various research methods not detailed in the text	1. overall there is a positive impact 2. difficult to identify whether motivation influences learning achievement, or whether learning achievement promotes motivation, or even if both are influenced 3. influenced by social dynamics and power relations	The relationship between motivation and second language learning cannot be accurately measured
Learner preferences	The only thing that has been extensively studied is field independence and field dependence	Research on learning styles should make us sceptical of the notion that a particular teaching method or material is suitable for the needs of all learners	Few studies have examined the correlation between different learning styles and success in second language acquisition
Learner beliefs	Based on previous learning experiences or assumptions	Learners' beliefs may be a powerful mediator of their experiences in the classroom	This is an area where little work has been done
Age of acquisition	1.MP:transcribed the interviews 2.JJ & EN:Grammatical judgements 3.CS & MH:follow up survey (Pronunciation, Auditory discrimination, Morphology, Sentence repetition, Sentence translation, Sentence judgement, Peabody picture vocabulary test, Story comprehension, Storytelling)	1. Supports the CPH 2. Supports the CPH 3. Does not support the CPH	In research studies it is crucial to consider the objectives of the teaching programme and the context in which it takes place, and the age factor cannot be separated from other factors.

To summarise, although the age of acquisition is one of the factors that affect an individual's achievement in second language acquisition, other factors such as motivation, intelligence, aptitude, personality, learner preferences and learner beliefs are also important determinants of learning speed and eventual learning achievement (Candlin & Mercer, 2003, p.57). And because of individual differences and variability, as well as other factors such as environment and society, these characteristics do not exist independently, but maybe mutually reinforcing, causal or even mutually inhibiting. The greatest difficulty in research is it hard to accurately measuring and identifying the effect of a particular factor on second language learning, which is a rather complex and difficult problem. However, despite the difficulties, an experienced and sensitive teacher should be able to identify the learning style of the learner, the personality of the learner and so on, and to create an environment that is suitable for the learning of the learner with the limited information obtained from the learner, and to choose a teaching style that is more suitable for learners to help them succeed in learning the second language.

I believe that intelligence, aptitude and personality are difficult to change, but motivation and attitude, learner preferences and learner beliefs are relatively easy to change. However, the factors that influence a learner's success in second language acquisition often cannot be categorised as just one of these factors but may include several of them, and they do not necessarily exist independently, but are intertwined and interact with each other. Researchers, therefore, have problems and difficulties in measuring the impact of these factors on learners. In addition to strengthening the in-depth study of each factor, researchers should also think systematically about the issue of second language learning, not only to find good tools and methods to accurately measure the impact of each factor on second language learning but also to find the internal logical relationships between the factors that are worth investigating.

Next, I would like to talk about the factor of motivation. Motivation is not only one of the key factors influencing achievement in second language learning, but it is also, to a certain extent, a prerequisite for other influences. In other words, even if a person has a good aptitude, if he or she does not have the motivation to learn a second language, he or she is unlikely to be very successful in acquiring it. On the contrary, motivation is a factor that can largely overcome the lack of other factors and still allow the learner to achieve success in second language acquisition. For example, some people may have an average natural ability, but if they are sufficiently motivated, they can also do well in second language learning. As Gardner and Lambert (1972) have argued, most people eventually acquire a second language in a given linguistic context, even if they are differently gifted, when the social context requires it (Dörnyei, 1998, quoted in Gardner & Lambert, 1972). It is therefore well worth exploring and studying as an educator and researcher.

The dominant theories of motivation are mainly from social psychology and motivational psychology. The most influential of these is the theory of reasoned action and its extension, the theory of planned behaviour in social psychology, and the expectancy-value theories, goal theories and self-determination theory in motivational psychology (Dörnyei, 1998). The combination of these motivational theories with L2 is divided into two main groups, theoretical

contribution and descriptive (Dörnyei, 1998). The first group offers several models and approaches to conceptualising motivation, including Robert Gardner's social psychological approach (1985), Richard Clément's concept of linguistic self-confidence (Clément et al, 1977) and self-determination theory in L2 research (Dörnyei, 1998). In addition to Dörnyei's (1994a) extended framework, Williams and Burden's (1997) extended framework, Tremblay and Gardner's (1995) extended model and Schumann's neurobiological model, etc (Dörnyei, 1998). The corresponding descriptive studies have focused on describing language learners' motivation in specific sociocultural, ethnolinguistic and educational contexts, albeit involving smaller samples, 'were also conducted in other parts of the world' (Dörnyei, 1998, p.129). Since the 1990s, however, a large body of research has provided evidence that the motivation of many people is influenced to a considerable extent by contextual change (Dörnyei, 1998).

I agree with Gardner's social psychological approach, as mentioned in chapter 2, it is difficult for researchers to accurately measure the relationship between motivation and learning achievement, but Gardner believed that motivation is good if it is formed, regardless of the source of motivation, and also took into account both attitude and social factors in his theory. Gardner (1985:10) defines second language motivation as 'the extent to which individual works or strives to learn the language because of a desire to do so and the satisfaction experienced in this activity' (Dörnyei, 1998, quoted in Gardner 1985). This concept includes not only the motivational intensity, desire to learn the language, but also an attitude towards the act of learning the language. And he argues that the overall configuration of these three components is what ultimately leads to achievement and that this mixture is necessary (Dörnyei, 1998, quoted in Gardner 1985:169). This is because truly motivated individuals demonstrate all three components, and this is based on his and his colleagues' empirical research and extensive validation. His theory of motivation is therefore particularly well developed in the construct of the integrative motive, the Attitude/Motivation Test Battery and the socio-educational model.

In Gardner's model, although an integrative/instrumental dichotomy does exist, this is just at the goal level and is not part of the core motivation (Dörnyei, 1998). This is because, in his view, the two motivational orientations function only as prerequisites for motivating learners' learning behaviour and are only used to help motivate the motivation; as soon as motivation is aroused, the source of motivation becomes relatively unimportant (Dörnyei, 1998, quoted in Gardner 1985:169). As mentioned before, one of the difficulties that researchers have encountered is the inability to determine whether motivation causes learning achievement or whether learning achievement reinforces motivation, since motivation is a dynamic process that changes until learners reach their goals. But as long as motivation was established, it can be confirmed that it has an impact on learning achievement. If one looks at this issue using systems thinking, looking at motivation outside of its original framework and integrating the various motivations into a whole, the problem may become easier to solve.

Secondly, in second language learning, social psychologists assume that attitudes have a directional influence on behaviour. As Ajzen and Fishbein (1997) argue, the more direct the correspondence between attitudes and behavioural goals, the higher the correlation between attitudes and actions. Gardner's attitudes are concerned with 'the act of learning a language'. And

he sees 'attitudes to the learning situation' as one of the key components of integrative motivation.

Finally, in Gardner's socio-educational model(Dörnyei, 1998, quoted in Gardner 1995), he has conducted extensive empirical research combining social, pedagogical, language anxiety, parental influence and learning context factors with motivation. It can be seen that Gardner's theory of motivation takes into account all major aspects of the individual and the environment.

In fact, motivation has a greater impact on older learners than on children, whether it is motivated by their own will or by a desire to achieve something or both, but strong motivation can be useful support for long-term language learning. Furthermore, it has been shown that the social environment can influence the formation of learners' motivation and may even lead to changes in motivation and attitudes towards the language, which is in line with Deci & Ryan's (1985) self-determination theory, which states that under certain circumstances the social environment can have an impact on the individual and can even lead to personal motivation(Dörnyei, 1998, quoted in Deci & Ryan , 1985). Therefore, some insights can be gained from the perspective of teachers that while it is good that learners are motivated by their own personal intentions, teachers can also motivate learners by learning ways and techniques to intervene and influence them appropriately. Although Gardner's study does not centre well on whether motivation influences learning achievement or learning achievement reinforces motivation, it undeniably that it does not matter what the motivation is, as long as it is generated.

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