



THE IMPACT OF AGE, MOTIVATION AND LEARNING STYLES ON SUCCESSFUL PERFORMANCE IN EFL

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Abstract: *The article discusses the impact of some learner characteristics such as motivation, age and learning styles on successful acquisition of EFL. It develops the viewpoint that learners' specific learning needs such as style preferences, age factors and learning strategy specifications should be taken into consideration while teaching English to students in the EFL classroom.*

Key words: *EFL, motivation, age factors, learning styles.*

Introduction

There is general agreement that individual differences seem to have a greater affect on the acquisition of the L2. The nature of the specific individual differences and the degree to which the affect individual aspects of the acquisition of the L2 are of greater affect on achievement. (Ellis 1995) In the process of learning a foreign language, students learn a subject at different rates and strikingly different levels of completeness because of factors within learners themselves that influence their ability to learn. These include effective factors, motivation, the learners age, gender and social background, learning styles and memory. Brown (2000) sees that personality type plays a vital role in ESL. According to him, students do not go through only a cognitive process while learning, but also through an effective one. In other words, there is a very significant correlation between personality type, motivation and cognition. All the factors which have mentioned above affect the proficiency level achieved by different learners.

It seems that one of the undergrounds in succeeding in EFL is much a matter of motivation before being its linguistic or didactic nature (i.e teaching methods and the available material) In this Chomsky (1989) says that "the truth of the matter is that about 99% of teaching is making students interested in the materials". Many researchers and educators have emphasized to understand and explain motivation and to understand what factors affect it. They also emphasize the fact that it should be taken into account in any endeavor to investigate and potential successes or failures in learning and teaching. It would be great benefit if students came filled with motivation to learn. And even they did, learning might still seem boring or unimportant to some students. Teachers have three major goals according to Woolfolk (2004). The first is to get students productively involved with the work of the class: In other words to create the state of motivation to learn. The second and longer term goal is to develop in our students the trait of being motivated to learn so they will be able to "to educate themselves through their lifetime" (Bandira 1996) and finally students should be cognitively engaged to think deeply about what they study. (Blumenfeld, Puro)

All people have preferences for ways to learn. Research shows that students learn a subject at different rates with strikingly different levels of completeness. These preferences are called an



individual's learning style. Learning styles can initially be defined in a seemingly straight forward intuitively convincing manner. According to the standard definition, they refer to “an individual's natural, habitual and preferred way of absorbing, processing and retaining new information and skills” (Reid 1995) More simply Brown (2000) defines a learning styles as “a term that refers to consistent and rather enduring tendencies or preferences within an individual”. Literally dozens of dimensions of learning styles have been identified in the field of SLA by educators and psychologists (Ehmann and Leaver 2003; Wintergest, Cohen 1998).

One of the dimensions of learning style – one that is salient in a formal classroom setting- is the preference that learners show toward visual, auditory and kinesthetic input. According to Brown (2000) visual learners prefer reading, studying charts, making drawings and the like. Whereas auditory learners prefer to take information in a form of sounds, listening to lectures and audiotapes are two instances of their preferences.

Kinesthetic learners show a preference for demonstrations and physical activity involving bodily movement. Successful learners make use of both visual and auditory input. However one must be more preferred to the other.

Despite “the younger, the better” belief, the critical period hypothesis in second language acquisition is not fully supported by empirical research in many countries. As far as the differences between adult and child language acquisition is concerned, Singleton (1995) stated that there are different views regarding the age issue, including the belief that children are in all aspects more efficient and effective second language learners than adults and that adolescent and adults are in all aspects more efficient and effective second language learners than children.

Conclusion

Learner factors such as age, learning styles, motivation play great role in language acquisition development. Teaching methods, techniques and strategies should be adopted and based on the learner needs such as age, learning style, learning strategies and motivation. Learner peculiarities in terms of their learning styles, strategies and age factors should be taken into account in order to promote success in EFL classroom.

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