Beyond the Domain of Language

What are Individual Differences?

- Age
- Aptitude
- Cognitive and learning styles
- Language learning strategies
- Motivation

Age
- Age on arrival in a new L2 community
- Length of residence in the L2 community

Aptitude
- There is a specific talent for learning foreign languages.
- This talent is considerably different from one learner to another.
**Cognitive and Learning Style**

- Cognitive style is ...  
  - a predisposition to process information in a characteristic manner.

- Learning style is ...  
  - a typical preference for approaching learning in general.

**Language Learning Strategies**

- Behaviors, actions, or thoughts which learners use to make language learning more successful.

**Motivation**

- Motivation concerns the direction and magnitude of human behavior, specifically ...  
  - Why you decide on a particular action
  - How long you are willing to sustain the activity
  - How hard you pursue your goal

**Aptitude**

- American psychologist J. B. Carroll started the study of language learning aptitude.
  
  - He proposed four components of language learning aptitude:
    - Phonetic coding ability
    - Grammatical sensitivity
    - Rote learning ability
    - Inductive language learning ability

**Individual Differences and L2 Learning Success**

- Aptitude and motivation combined correlate at above 0.5 with second language learning success.

- Correlations of cognitive/learning style or learning strategies with second language learning success are much lower.
Aptitude

These four components are measured in the MLAT (Modern Language Aptitude Test)


Sample Questions from the MLAT

Part I. Number Learning

You will hear some instructions read aloud. The speaker will then teach you some numbers

Part II. Phonetic Script

For each question, you will see a set of four separate syllables. Each syllable is spelled phonetically. A speaker will model the sounds for you by pronouncing each of the four syllables in a set. Then the speaker will model the sounds in the next set.

Part III. Spelling Cues

Part IV. Words In Sentences

Part V. Paired Associates

Sample Questions from the MLAT

Part I. Answers

A. 31
B. 33
C. 2
D. 23

Sample Questions from the MLAT

After the speaker models the sounds in five sets, you will be asked to look back at the first set. The speaker will go through the groups again, but this time the speaker will say only one of the 4 syllables in a set. Your task is to select the syllable that has a phonetic spelling that matches the syllable you heard. For example, you would look at the first five sets. They would look something like this ...

1. bot but bok buk
2. bok buk bov bof
3. geet gut beet but
4. beek beev but buv
5. geeb geet buf but
Sample Questions from the MLAT

Part II. Answers

1. buk
2. bok
3. gut
4. beev
5. geeb

Sample Questions from the MLAT

• PART III SPELLING CUES
• Each question below has a group of words. The word at the top of the group is not spelled in the usual way. Instead, it is spelled approximately as it is pronounced. Your task is to recognize the disguised word from the spelling. In order to show that you recognize the disguised word, look for one of the five words beneath it that corresponds most closely in meaning to the disguised word. When you find this word or phrase, write down the letter that corresponds to your choice.

1. klozkloz
   • A. attire
   • B. nearby
   • C. stick
   • D. giant
   • E. relatives

2. restrnt
   • A. food
   • B. self-control
   • C. sleep
   • D. space explorer
   • E. drug

3. prezns
   • A. kings
   • B. explanations
   • C. dates
   • D. gifts
   • E. forecasts

4. grbj
   • A. car port
   • B. seize
   • C. boat
   • D. boast
   • E. waste
Sample Questions from the MLAT

Part III. Answers

1. kloz A. attire
2. restrnt A. food
3. prezns D. gifts
4. grbj E. waste

Sample Questions from the MLAT

- PART IV. WORDS IN SENTENCES

In each of the following questions, we will call the first sentence the key sentence. One word in the key sentence will be underlined and PRINTED IN CAPITAL LETTERS. Your task is to select the letter of the word in the second sentence that plays the same role in that sentence as the underlined word in the key sentence.

Look at the following sample question:

JOHN took a long walk in the woods.

Children in blue jeans were singing and dancing in the park.

A B C D E

Sample Questions from the MLAT

1. MARY is happy.
   
   From the look on your face, I can tell
   
   A B C
   
   that you must have had a bad day.
   
   D E

Sample Questions from the MLAT

2. We wanted to go out, BUT we were too tired.

Because of our extensive training, we were confident

A B

when we were out sailing, yet we were always

C D E

aware of the potential dangers of being on the lake.

Sample Questions from the MLAT

3. John said THAT Jill liked chocolate.

In our class, that professor claimed that

A B C

he knew that girl on the television news.

D E

Sample Questions from the MLAT

4. The officer gave me a TICKET!

When she went away to college, the

A

young man’s daughter wrote him the most

B C

beautiful letter that he had ever received.

D E
Sample Questions from the MLAT

Part IV. Answers

1. C ‘I’
2. D ‘yet’
3. C ‘that’
4. D ‘letter’

Sample Questions from the MLAT

PART V. PAIRED ASSOCIATES

Your task here is to MEMORIZE the Maya-English vocabulary below.

Maya English

c?on gun
si? wood
k?ab hand
kab juice
bat ax
pal son

Sample Questions from the MLAT

1. bat
   • A. animal
   • B. stick
   • C. jump
   • D. ax
   • E. stone

Sample Questions from the MLAT

2. kab
   • A. juice
   • B. cart
   • C. corn
   • D. tool
   • E. run

Sample Questions from the MLAT

3. c?on
   • A. story
   • B. gun
   • C. eat
   • D. mix
   • E. bird

Sample Questions from the MLAT

4. k?ab
   • A. road
   • B. tree
   • C. yell
   • D. fish
   • E. hand
Sample Questions from the MLAT

5. si?
   • A. look
   • B. yes
   • C. forgive
   • D. cook
   • E. wood

Sample Questions from the MLAT

6. pal
   • A. chief
   • B. son
   • C. friend
   • D. gold
   • E. boat

Sample Questions from the MLAT

Part V. Answers
1. D. ax
2. A. juice
3. B. gun
4. E. hand
5. E. wood
6. B. son

Other Measures of Aptitude

• PLAB

• DLAB

• CANAL-F

Aptitude and Age

• Johnson and Newport (1989) found ...
  • For immigrants who arrived in the USA younger than 17 years old, age is strongly negatively correlated with attained proficiency in English.
  • For immigrants who arrived older than 17, there is no correlation between age on arrival and proficiency.

• DeKeyser (2000) found ...
  • For immigrants who arrived in the USA younger than 17 years old, there is no correlation between aptitude and attained proficiency.
  • For immigrants who arrived older than 17, there is a correlation of 0.60 between aptitude and proficiency.
  • The few subjects who arrived in the US after the age of 17 and who achieved native-like levels of English all have high aptitude scores.
Aptitude

- Aptitude has been poorly regarded among language teachers because it has been perceived as anti-egalitarian.
- The bulk of language teaching materials have assumed that all learners are the same.
- But correlations of aptitude with second language achievement range between 0.2 and 0.4.

Motivation

- Motivation concerns the direction and magnitude of human behavior, specifically ...
  - Why you decide on a particular action
  - How long you are willing to sustain the activity
  - How hard you pursue your goal

Two Approaches to Motivation

- The Canadian social-psychological approach
  - The neurobiology of stimulus appraisal

The Canadian Social-Psychological Approach

- Robert Gardner and his colleagues found that English-Canadian attitudes toward French-Canadians influenced their success in learning French.
- They assumed that learners' attitudes fell into two broad categories:
  - Integrateive motivation
  - Instrumental motivation

The Canadian Social-Psychological Approach

- Integrative motivation
  - Reflects a positive disposition toward the L2 group and the desire to interact with and even to become similar to valued members of that community.
- Instrumental motivation
  - Is primarily associated with the potential pragmatic gains of L2 proficiency, such as getting a better job or a higher salary.
The Canadian Social-Psychological Approach

- Gardner’s method:
  - The Attitude/Motivation Test Battery (A/MTB) was published in

The Attitude/Motivation Test Battery (A/MTB) Measures

- Desire to learn French
- Motivational intensity
- Attitudes toward learning French
- Attitudes toward French Canadians
- Attitudes toward European French people
- Interest in foreign languages
- Integrative orientation
- Instrumental orientation
- Orientation index
- My French teacher
- My French course
- French class anxiety
- Parental encouragement

Desire to Learn French

During French class, I would like:

a) to have a combination of French and English spoken.
b) to have as much English as possible spoken.
c) to have only French spoken.

Motivational Intensity

I actively think about what I have learned in my French class:

a) very frequently.
b) hardly ever.
c) once in a while.

Attitudes toward Learning French

- French is an important part of the school programme.
- When I leave school, I shall give up the study of French entirely because I am not interested in it.

Attitudes toward French Speakers

- French Canadians are a very sociable, warm-hearted and creative people.
- The European French are considerate of the feelings of others.
Interest in Foreign Languages

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

• Even though Canada is relatively far from countries speaking other languages, it is important for Canadians to learn foreign languages.

• I wish I could speak another language perfectly.

Integrative or Instrumental Orientation

• Studying French can be important to me because it will allow me to be more at ease with fellow Canadians who speak French.

• Studying French can be important for me only because I’ll need it for my future career.

Teacher and Course

MY FRENCH TEACHER

efficient ___:___:___:___:___:___:___ inefficient
insensitive ___:___:___:___:___:___:___ sensitive

MY FRENCH COURSE

meaningful ___:___:___:___:___:___:___ meaningless
interesting ___:___:___:___:___:___:___ boring

Anxiety and Encouragement

French Class Anxiety

It embarrasses me to volunteer answers in our French class.

• Parental Encouragement

My parents try to help me with my French.

The Social Psychological Model of Second Language Learning

Proposed by Robert Gardner

Individual Differences

Integrativeness

Cultural Beliefs

Social Milieu

Attitudes Toward the Learning Situation

Motivation

Language Aptitude

Formal

Linguistic

Informal

Non-linguistic

Outcomes
John Schumann’s Theory of Stimulus Appraisal

• Throughout their lifetimes, individuals accrue idiosyncratic preferences and aversions which lead them to like certain things and dislike others.
• Appraisal systems are based in neurobiology and they appraise current stimuli according to the accrued history of an individual’s preferences and aversions.
• The appraisal system guides SLA. It appraises the teacher, method, and syllabus, as well as the target language, its speakers, and their culture.

Categories of Stimulus Appraisal

1. Novelty
   • Did you expect this situation to occur?

2. Intrinsic pleasantness
   • Did you find the event pleasant or unpleasant?

3. Goal/need significance
   • Did the event help or hinder your progress?

4. Coping potential
   • Were you able to cope with the event and its consequences?

5. Compatibility with own and social standards
   • Did you judge the event proper/improper? How would your friends judge it?

The Neural Mechanism

• The amygdala
• The orbitofrontal cortex
• The body proper

• The amygdala and orbitofrontal cortex generate stimulus appraisals that contribute to cognition (decision making).

Stimulus Appraisal in Learner Biographies


Stimulus Appraisal in Learner Biographies


Stimulus Appraisal in Learner Biographies

- Novelty
  - Did the author expect this situation to occur?
- Intrinsic pleasantness
  - Did the author find the event pleasant or unpleasant?
- Goal/need significance
  - Did the event help or hinder the author's progress?
- Coping potential
  - Was the author able to cope with the event and its consequences?
- Compatibility with own and social standards
  - Did the author judge the event proper/improper? How did their friends judge it?