

Motivation and Personality Factors in Language Learning: Is the "Affective Filter Hypothesis" a Satisfactory Explanation?

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言語学習における動機づけとパーソナリティの要因

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<要 約>

本研究は、日本人と韓国人の両学生のEFL学習に関する研究の一環として行なったものである。EFL学習に対する態度や性格に関する質問項目を作成し、日本の某大学生にアンケート調査を実施した。EFL学習に関して分析した結果、パーソナリティと動機づけの要因は異なって作用することが見出された。すなわちパーソナリティ要因はwritingとspeakingの学習に対比して影響を及ぼすものであり、一方動機づけ要因はEFL学習全体に関与している。本研究の結果は、Krashenの情緒的フィルター仮説（情緒的要因は第二言語の習得を妨害することがありうるとする説）の妥当性に疑問を投げかけるものである。[本稿は英国カンタベリー・ケント大学へ提出した修士論文の一部である。]

Introduction

Attitude, motivation and personality have long been considered factors which may contribute to success or failure in learning, especially language learning. Littlewood (1984) notes that personality factors have not been conclusively related to second language ability or performance but that "many people believe that personality will one day be shown to be an important influence on success in second language learning", going on to suggest that "extroversion could turn out to be a greater advantage in natural learning situations than in formal learning".

Krashen and Terrell (1983) make a similar point in relation to affective factors in general: Krashen's 'affective filter hypothesis' "states that attitudinal variables relating to success in second language acquisition generally relate directly to language acquisition but not necessarily to language learning". (The distinction between 'acquisition', a subconscious process essentially the same as that used by children acquiring their first language, and 'learning', which is equated to developing a conscious, explicit knowledge **about** the language, is of central importance in Krashen's theories). They go on to cite the importance of motivation, especially

integrative motivation, "good self images", and the need to "lower anxiety levels". They do not appear to differentiate between different types of affective variables; all are treated as contributing to an 'affective filter', the role of which is "to prevent input being used for language acquisition". This purely negative view of the role of affective factors has been criticised as counter-intuitive by Gregg (1984), since it implies that strong motivation to learn a language is no more beneficial than average, 'non-negative', motivation.

The way in which affective factors may contribute to language development is a subject of considerable controversy. McDonough (1981) observes that "it may be that an outgoing personality is a valuable asset for a language learner in itself, but this may also be confounded in the classroom situation with the equal advantage of a large share of the classroom talk". Ellis (1984) considers affective factors to be important mainly because they "influence both how much and which kind of discourse the learner contributes to". In other words, whereas Krashen sees the role of these factors as being direct but negative, Ellis sees them as being indirect, without specifying their polarity. Krashen also emphasises the role of these factors in an 'input' filter rather than in limiting production. More recently, however, he has introduced the concept of an 'output filter' to deal with cases where speakers are unable to perform at the level of their underlying competence because of affective factors (Krashen, 1985).

The existence and polarity of any correlation between affective factors and language development is brought into question by many of the studies in this field. For example, Chihara and Oller (1978), studying the relationship between the attitudes of adult Japanese speakers and their attained proficiency in English, found correlations to be generally weak, and that "in some cases where positive correlations are expected, negative or insignificant correlations are observed". Busch (1982), studying the relationship between the "introversion-extraversion tendencies" of Japanese students and their proficiency in English, found that "the hypothesis that extraverts are more proficient in English was not supported": introverts scored better on many measures such as reading, grammar and pronunciation.

Administration of an attitude/personality 'questionnaire'

In order to explore these matters, in particular Krashen's 'affective filter hypothesis', an attitude/personality 'questionnaire' was devised and administered to two groups of students at a Japanese university, as one part of a wider-ranging study of the EFL performance of Japanese and Korean students (Baker, 1986). The questionnaire consisted of thirty English statements, some intended to reflect personality variables such as introversion-extroversion, others to reflect motivation, while others reflect more than one factor, as well as attitudes more specific to the learning of

English, e.g. "Learning to speak other languages can be fun" and "The only way to master English is to study English grammar harder". Respondents were asked to 'agree', 'disagree' or express 'no opinion' on each statement.

The questionnaire was administered to a third-year optional 'oral English' class in January 1985 and again in the following academic year (in April 1985) to the next optional oral class, many students of which also took an optional composition class conducted by the writer. The completed questionnaires were not reviewed until after other tests and class grading had been completed, in order to avoid any possible teacher's preconceptions influencing grades. After grading, responses to each statement were analysed and compared with various measures of performance in English. Students were divided into high and low performers according to various measures, and sub-groups of those doing better in oral or in written English were also identified. Wherever the questionnaire responses of two sub-groups revealed more than a slight difference, a chi-square test of statistical significance was applied to determine whether there was a significant correlation between the questionnaire response and the aspect of performance under consideration.

Results

A large majority of students responded to many of the attitude/motivation statements in a 'favourable' way. For example, 75% or more agreed that 'It's interesting to learn about other cultures' and that 'Learning to speak other languages can be fun'. This is not surprising — all the students were members of optional classes and we might therefore expect them to be well motivated. The full list of statements used in the questionnaire, together with the total numbers of students agreeing, disagreeing or expressing 'no opinion' on each statement, is shown in an appendix.

The statements to which different sub-groups of students responded in a significantly different way were as follows:

S.14. 'After I graduate, I probably won't use English again'.

Of those responding to the questionnaire in the 1984/85 oral English class, nine high scorers and nine low scorers (in terms of overall marks for the class) were identified. Out of the nine high scorers, only one agreed (i.e. said he would probably *not* use English after graduation) and eight disagreed. In contrast, four of the low scorers agreed, three disagreed and two expressed 'no opinion'. This difference was found to be significant ($\chi^2 = 6.07$, $p < 0.05$, 2 df).

S.15. 'No other place is as nice as my home town'.

The same class was redivided into those who were relatively fluent at interview (in

terms of English words uttered per second of recorded speech) and those who were less fluent ; in this case, there were eight students in each sub-group, ignoring intermediate scores. Out of the eight relatively fluent students, four agreed, three disagreed and one expressed ' no opinion ' on statement 15. In contrast, all eight of the ' less fluent ' students disagreed. ($\chi^2 = 7.27$, $p < 0.05$, 2 df) .

It appears that those who are satisfied with their hometown are less likely to hesitate while speaking. It may be that something like ' personal contentment ' (cf Krashen and Terrell's " good self images ") is being indirectly measured here. However, the possibility that the negative phraseology of the statement simply confused more of the weaker students cannot be ruled out.

S.19. ' I get nervous in front of strangers ' .

The same class was redivided on the basis of scores in a listening comprehension test. Out of six students who had obtained high (5 or 6 out of 6) scores, only one agreed with this statement, while five disagreed. In contrast, all four students in the same class who had low (0 - 3 out of 6) scores agreed. ($\chi^2 = 6.67$, $p < 0.05$, 1df or 2df) . This significant difference may be related to the fact that the listening test, using the writer's recorded voice, had been administered while he was still a comparative stranger to the students (in May, 1984).

In the 1985/86 class, this statement also differentiated between students who obtained a higher ranking in the ' oral English ' class than in the optional composition class and those doing better in the latter. Out of six students with an ' oral preference ', one agreed and five disagreed with this statement. In contrast, out of six with an apparent ' preference ' for written work, five agreed and one expressed ' no opinion ' . ($\chi^2 = 8.67$, $p < 0.05$, 2df) .

S.9. ' I feel nervous whenever I have to speak English ' .

This statement differentiated even more dramatically between students with an oral ' preference ' and those with a ' preference ' for composition (as shown by their ranking in the two 1985/86 classes) : all six ' oral preference ' students disagreed with this statement, while all six of those doing better in composition agreed.

($\chi^2 = 12.0$, $p < 0.01$, 1df or 2df) .

S.6. ' I'd like to meet more English-speaking people ' .

Students taking both of the optional 1985/86 classes were also redivided into those with high combined marks from the two classes and those with low combined marks, eliminating those with intermediate scores. (Each sub-group was, by chance, composed of equal numbers of ' oral preference ', ' composition preference ' and ' all rounders ') . All six of the high scorers agreed with statement six, while the low scorers were even-

ly divided between those who agreed, those who disagreed, and those expressing 'no opinion' (two each) ($\chi^2 = 6.0$, $p < 0.05$, 2df)

S.27. 'In a group of people, I never speak first'.

Out of the six students with high combined scores in 1985/86, four disagreed with this statement and two expressed 'no opinion'. Of the six low scorers, one agreed with the statement and five expressed 'no opinion'. ($\chi^2 = 6.29$, $p < 0.05$, 2df).

As with statements 14 and 15, there is a possibility that the negative phraseology of statement 27 may simply have confused more of the weaker students, with the result that more of them declined to agree or disagree. Oddly enough, however, the 1984/85 class, which was less responsive and generally weaker than 1985/86, produced only two 'no opinions' out of twenty responders, compared with twelve out of twenty in the following year, a significant difference ($\chi^2 = 11.03$, $p < 0.01$, 2df). Not surprisingly, the 1984/85 class yielded no significant correlation between low scores and 'no opinion'. It may be that the confusion resulting from negative phraseology produced a more complex relationship, with able students tending to disagree (except perhaps in the case of strongly introverted students), very weak students agreeing or disagreeing (perhaps at random), and intermediate students (low scorers in 1985/86 but average in 1984/85), conscious of the confusion but not knowing what to do about it, playing safe and expressing 'no opinion'.

Further discussion and XII conclusion.

Krashen's 'input filter' hypothesis appears to be supported by the significant correlation between listening test results and responses to statement 19. However, in Bialystock's (1978) model of second language learning, comprehension of particular passages or messages is considered to be part of the 'output level' rather than the 'input level', since comprehension as well as production depends upon prior linguistic (and other) knowledge. Even this limited evidence, therefore, does not necessarily prove that the more crucial input (cf Corder's <1981> 'intake') to the 'knowledge level' (Bialystok) or 'acquired competence' (Krashen) is filtered in this way.

While responses to a number of statements on the questionnaire were significantly correlated with various aspects of performance, providing some evidence for Krashen's 'output filter' hypothesis, a more salient conclusion can be drawn from the types of response which correlate with different measures of performance. Responses to the attitude/motivational statements 6 and 14 were significantly correlated with overall attainment (oral alone or oral + composition). Responses to the obvious 'personality' statements 9 and 19 correlated with oral vs composition 'preference' but

not significantly with overall attainment, while responses to statement 15 (possibly reflecting contentment) correlated with 'words per second' fluency. As we have already seen, responses to statement 27 seem to demand a more complex explanation.

While these results are in some cases difficult to interpret, they suggest that motivation is the most important 'affective' factor as far as overall performance is concerned, while personality factors may primarily affect differential skill development. Anxiety may be a handicap in speaking (and perhaps even in listening), but might actually improve the quality of written work. (Chastain <1975> found negative correlations between test anxiety and course grade in the case of an audio-lingual group learning French, but positive correlations between such anxiety and final grade in all other cases).

If this interpretation is correct, it suggests that Krashen's 'affective filter hypothesis', even when modified to include two filters, one for input and one for output, is too simplistic a model to account for the available data. Krashen and Terrell's (1983) statement that attitudinal variables relate to language acquisition but not necessarily to language learning does not take account of the distinction between personality factors and motivation; it seems clear that motivation can affect learning as well as acquisition and, while the effect of personality factors might be seen as relating to acquisition rather than learning, this ignores the possible differential effects on different skills.

The recent work of Ely (1986) undermines another aspect of Krashen's theory, namely the alleged *direct* effect of attitudinal variables. Ely, in an investigation of "a causal model of second language learning", has found that 'Language Class Discomfort' influenced 'Classroom Participation' only indirectly, through its negative effect on 'Language Class Ristaking'. In turn, 'Classroom Participation' "positively predicted Oral Correctness". Ely goes on to suggest that classroom teachers "may wish to devise and test ... various strategies for lessening Language Class Discomfort", since students can be encouraged to play a more active role only when they feel more secure. This is consistent with the methodological suggestions of Krashen and Terrell's 'Natural approach', but not with its more limited theoretical foundations.

In conclusion, the research surveyed in this paper seems to be encouraging news for students, since it implies that those who really wish to learn, acquire or develop a second language can do so, regardless of their personality; introverts and extroverts may have different skill preferences, but this should not affect the overall rate of development. Teachers should be aware of the importance of motivation, and do what they can to lessen any discomfort students may feel in language classes; an awareness of the way in which personality differences may affect performance in different skills may also be salutary.

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APPENDIX : The Attitude/Personality 'Questionnaire'.

Each statement is followed by a ratio representing the total number of students agreeing, disagreeing or expressing 'no opinion', out of an overall total of 40 (20 in each academic year).

1. 'It's interesting to learn about other cultures'. < 36 agreed : 1 disagreed : 3
'N/O' >
2. 'I sometimes like to be alone '. < 32 : 3 : 5>
3. 'Learning to speak other languages can be fun '. < 31 : 3 : 6 >
4. 'The only way to master English is to study English grammar harder '.
< 2 : 33 : 5 >
5. 'I don't like changing my way of thinking '. < 9 : 24 : 7 >
6. 'I'd like to meet more English-speaking people '. <30 : 3 :7>
7. 'Foreigners make me feel uneasy '. < 9 : 22 : 9 >
8. 'I like going to parties '. < 29 : 4 : 7 >
9. 'I feel nervous whenever I have to speak English '. < 18 : 19 :3 >
10. 'We should learn to think in English '. < 26 : 5 : 9 >
11. 'I feel awkward when I have to speak to older people, or people in authority '.
< 17 : 17 : 6 >
12. 'It's impossible for Japanese people to speak English properly'.<10: 23: 7>
13. 'I want to know how foreigners think and feel '. < 33 : 5 : 2>
14. 'After I graduate, I probably won't use English again '. < 6 : 29 : 5 >
15. 'No other place is as nice as my home town '. < 9 : 25 :6 >
16. 'If I learn to speak English perfectly, I won't really be Japanese any more'.
< 4 : 33 : 3>
17. 'Saying nothing is better than making a mistake '. < 5 : 32 : 3 >
18. 'I hate being laughed at '. < 8 : 26 : 6>
19. 'I get nervous in front of strangers '. < 19 : 17 : 4 >
20. 'We can learn a lot from children '. < 33 : 1 : 6>
21. 'Foreigners are completely different from Japanese people '. < 8 : 27 : 5>
22. 'I'd like to live in a foreign country '. < 27 : 7 : 6>
23. 'A university is a good place to meet new people, have new experiences and get new
ideas '. < 38 : 1 : 1>
24. 'Japan is the best country in the world '. < 13 : 17 : 10>
25. 'I often read English books for pleasure '. < 8 : 21 : 11 >
26. 'I sometimes like to be different '. < 25 : 5 : 10 >
27. 'In a group of people, I never speak first '. < 9 : 17 : 14 >
28. 'I like meeting new people '. < 26 : 3 : 11 >
29. 'I get angry when I make mistakes '. < 9 : 25 : 6>
30. 'I like listening to English pop songs'. < 36 : 2 : 2>