II. 1. Introduction

Adolescence is marked by its peculiar features in every individual’s life. Later, on looking back, we laugh at ourselves, about the follies of that stage. But taken seriously, this period searches its own identity, does not compromise with personal freedom, rebels against parental and teachers’ authority, seeks advice from peers, prefers defiance rather than compliance, also, blooms to full potential and talents. Understanding this ‘stormy’ group needs a deep knowledge of their psychology. Hence, this chapter deals with the part of adolescent psychology that may be useful to teachers who handle them. The urge to be free and autonomous, the marked characteristics of this period, can be exploited with proper insight and planning so that the learners can be motivated to learn better, that too, on their own. The theories substantiating this faith in the adolescents are explored in this chapter.

II. 2. Encounter with the self; and stranger too

Adolescence is a period of continued behavioral development along a pathway established in childhood. This period is viewed as a time where biological, psychological and social transitions take place. Both positive and negative environmental influences such as adolescent physiology, schools, parents and risky environmental factors produce changes that can perturb
existing patterns of behavior. These behavior patterns include greater involvement in peer interactions, increase in risk taking behavior, conflicts between the adolescent and their parents, and marked increase in behavioral patterns denoting depression and anxiety (Spear, 2000; Stienberg and Morris, 2001). Teachers interacting with this group should have an insight into the psychological perspectives and ways to deal with them. Also, to motivate this group to become autonomous learners, teachers should be aware of the psychological theories associated with their cognitive development as well as their problems regarding their socio-cultural behavior. The physical changes, apparently noticeable, also contribute to their problems. The major changes in physical development involve the adolescent growth spurt and puberty. This leads to changes in social behaviors and influence in family decision making as well as more autonomy (Fabes and Martin, 2000).

Cognitive development in adolescence is associated with the development of mental abilities like abstract thinking, problem solving and hypothetic-deductive reasoning. Adolescents begin to use abstract and speculative critical thinking skills. They can formulate, test and evaluate hypothesis through the use of hypothetic - deductive reasoning (Craig 1999). Fischer (1980) proposed a theory of cognitive development by integrating behavioral and cognitive concepts called ‘skill-theory’ which emphasizes the reciprocal interactions of adolescents’
behaviors and the environmental factors affecting private behavior such as reasoning and problem solving.

According to Piaget (1954), adolescents, when he placed in the formal operational stage which is the focus of this study, tend to focus more on themselves, and he calls this ‘adolescent egocentrism’. Egocentric adolescents in formal operational stage believe that their thoughts and ideas are unique and not understood by others, especially parents and teachers (Fabes and Martin, 2000). Erik Erikson (1950, 1968) points out that, ‘identity formation’ is the major struggle that adolescents face in their personality development. Identity refers to the self questioning of who one is, where one is going, and how one fits in to society. Erikson defined the identity crisis as the discomfort that the adolescents experience as they question who they are and their role in society. James Marcia (1980) expanded Erikson’s theory and described four different states or statuses of identity formation:

1. In identity achievement, adolescents who have achieved their identity or who are actively exploring identity issue seem to have freedom and a close relationship with parents;

2. in identity diffusion, adolescents who have not yet questioned their identity are more likely to be distant from their parents than those adolescence in other statuses;
3. In identity closure, adolescents have committed to an identity without searching and fear rejection from their somewhat controlling parents; and

4. In identity moratorium, adolescents are in decisive, knowing about different identity options but not committing to anyone.

The influence that attending college has over identity formation is definitive. Another struggle for many adolescents is gender identity, which is more or less depending on the society in which one is brought up. Autonomy or the struggle for independence affects humans throughout their lives, but in adolescence the first major step is taken toward freedom and away from parental authoritarian patterns. The way the parents and teachers handle adolescents' strivings for autonomy and self efficacy patterns appears to influence high risk behavior of adolescents. During early adolescence, peer activities resolve around cliques or small groups of peers, usually of the same sex that interact frequently. By mid adolescence, these same sex cliques becomes mostly hetero sexual. Adolescents also belong to crowds and large peer groups that share related activities and values. Though they tend to choose friends on the basis of their own values acquired from their parents' behaviors and rules, in general they enjoy the cliques who allow freedom and autonomy. Hence the practices of autonomous learning is appreciated and enjoyed more at this stage and cooperative learning, peer teaching/learning, collaborative teaching, experiential
learning and peer assessment as well as self assessment— all work well at this stage.

Another main factor that influences adolescent behavior is the concept of ‘self’. Even the preverbal child may be said to have a self-concept. It is concluded that there is little evidence for self recognition before eight months of age. Another suggestion is that parents and teachers encourage the development of self-statements by asking questions like: “how do u feel?”, “what do u think?”, “Why did u do that?” etc. Vygotsky (1987) wrote extensively on how the ‘self extends beyond the skin’. That is, the origins of the self are the verbal social interactions the child has with its care givers and others. This source of the self in the public world enables the parents to shape self-verbalizations through prompting and reinforcing the child’s public statements. Once these public self-verbalizations are strong, the statements become self-reinforcing through automatic reinforcement. At this point, the process of extinguishing the private self-statements occurs. The result is that children learn to make private self statements. In adolescents the private self-statements influence their motivation to learn on their own (Novak and Pelaez, 2004).

Bandura (1977 a) used the term ‘self-efficacy beliefs’ for self-statements about the ability to succeed in accomplishing specific behaviors. He found self-efficacy verbal statements to be central in coping with stressful situations and to
underlie all successful therapeutic interventions. He proposed that the development of self-efficacy beliefs originates from successful accomplishment of tasks, by observing and imitating a model who is successful, by the persuasion and encouragement through statements such as “see, now you can do it!” and by the emotional arousal of the child. Thus self-efficacy refers to one’s beliefs regarding the ability to affect the environment.

‘Self-esteem’, on the other hand, comprises evaluative statements regarding ones abilities and appearance to others and bears heavily on one’s sense of self-efficacy. A person with a high self-esteem emits self-statements with high positive value: “I am good at mathematics.” “I am pretty good looking.” “People really like me.” etc. But one with a low self-esteem makes self-statements of high negative value. These self-statements are likely to originate from others in the person’s social environment: parents, peers or teachers.

Another topic dealing with the self is ‘self-control’. This deals with the conflict one experiences in choosing between different behaviors with different consequences. One way we can control ourselves is to make a commitment. In autonomous learning situations learning strategies can be designed to encourage self-control. ‘Learning contract’ (refer to chapter4 on learning strategies) is a very effective learning strategy taking into consideration the psychological concept of self-control, as the contract makes the learner
committed to complete the task that is undertaken. When dealing with adolescent learners, the concept of self and personality traits of the age plays a vital role in teaching/learning. As James Cottle (2005) says:

The works of adolescents are to construct a consolidated sense of self that integrate the most private explorations of that inner world affected by social values, norms, expectations, morality, convention, rules, procedures, rituals, all stories of the culture, all stories of those who populate culture of the adolescent (p.4).

In 'Mind Fields,' Cottle (op. cited.) argues that the period known as adolescence is essentially a social construct influenced greatly by popular culture. To understand young people, therefore, is to recognize how the very consciousness of adolescents is shaped by a culture, dominated by the entertainment industry, and the power of TV and computer constantly urging them to turn from the normal evolution of their personal and social lives. In this fundamentally distracting environment, young people explore their consciousness, sharing it with others, as well as form their sense of identity, all the while having these most inner experiences affected as much by the culture as by their own temperaments and personalities. It is the culture that determines the forms of recognition and independence, as well as intimacy and attachment
that adolescence must learn. Cottle argues for the value of self reflection as a
critical ingredient of identity formation and a fundamental antidote to distracting
cultural influences.

II.3. Order and chaos in human mind; and in learning too

Learning English language (which is an essential ingredient of current fashion
and metro life) at this stage helps the adolescents to identify themselves as part
of the group who are considered modern or fashionable or progressive. The
influence of media creates an urge to master the latest albums in English, watch
and discuss the latest movies in English, understand and enjoy the e-language,
joke and ads, follow the running commentaries of cricket etc... Therefore
appropriate selection of materials and methods which caters to the satisfaction of
the above urges will definitely provide high motivation to the adolescents in
learning English.

Though not directly related to the process of learning/teaching, an awareness
of behavior disorders during adolescence will help the teachers to identify such
disorders and plan and act accordingly. Studies identify anti social behavior as
the most common disorder among adolescents. This tends to be manifested as
extreme physical aggressiveness, loosing temper, arguing with adults, refusing
to comply with adults’ requests, deliberately doing things to annoy others, and
being angry, spiteful, touchy, or vindictive. This behavior tends to be more among males than among females. Antisocial boys are more inclined to steal and display aggression, whereas girls tend to misbehave sexually. Antisocial youths tend to have parents who exercise harsh punishment as well as highly inconsistent discipline practices. Abusive and aggressive behaviors of family members, poor parental discipline practices and monitoring of children, rejection by peers and social oppression can be other reasons for this behavior. Academic deficiency, poor academic performance, and development of delinquency in later life are the results of this behavior.

Conduct disorder is characterized as a group of behavioral and emotional problems in children and adolescents. Aggression, oppositional behaviors and other disruptive and rebellious behaviors are the most common problems in conduct disorders. Adolescents with these problems have great difficulty in following rules and behaving in a socially acceptable way. The typical behaviors exhibited are aggression to people and animals, destruction of property, deceitfulness, lying, stealing, and serious violation of rules such as running away from home.

‘Praise-and-ignore’ technique is one of the ways to deal with the behavioral disorders. Here no emotion should be shown when reacting to inappropriate
behaviors of adolescents. Wicks–Nelson and Israel (2003) suggest functional family therapy as a treatment program. Improving communication skills between the adolescent and family, adjust expectations and attitudes, and establish new meanings of positive and constructive behavior, are some of the ways to deal with the problem.

‘Oppositional defiant disorder’ (ODD) is another behavior disorder which is marked by defiance and hostile behavior toward authority figures. ODD is one of the most serious and common behavior problems of children and youth. School based intervention for ODD consist of adding adaptive behaviors to a child’s repertoire or expanding on existing behaviors with the goal of replacing or reducing the exhibition of maladaptive behaviors. Besides, establishing clear rules and directions, pacing the student’s progress at his or her own rate, positive and corrective feedback, time out, and the use of differential reinforcement of replacement or incompatible behaviors are some ways of dealing with the problem in cognitive therapy.

Some eating disorders like ‘anorexia nervosa and bulimia nervosa’ (nervous loss of appetite and eating binge and purging respectively) are commonly found among learners at adolescence. Cognitive and behavioral therapy employs positive and negative reinforcements like clearly explaining the problem,
hospitalizing and giving awareness regarding the importance of health. Self monitoring techniques and cognitive interventions such as self provided reinforcement were more effective in adolescents with these behavioral disorders.

Adolescent depression is a serious problem when we come across their learning problems. The most obvious aspect of depression in adolescence is a marked decrease in the frequency of certain behaviors and activities and an increase in the occurrence of avoidance and escape behaviors. Staying in bed all day, not socializing or participating with others or activities, difficulty in concentration, expressed feeling of worthlessness and dysphoria. Depression runs in families. Depressed parents use more punishments, show less affection and initiate more disagreement than non depressed parents.

Among learning disorders ‘dyslexia’ is one of the commonest problems, left unnoticed may have devastating effect. The popular Hindi movie, “Thare Zameen Par”, is a typical example of dyslexia where the child was victimized at home and at school. The failure of the teachers to identify the problem and behave accordingly may lead to disorder, life lasting. Visual and auditory problems are the next. A learner who always copying his friend’s note or who never copies what is on the board may have visual problem. Learners with
auditory difficulties may score less than expected and the reason remains undiscovered. So, teachers dealing this group should definitely have an insight into the common disorders among adolescents.

Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (AD/HD, often abbreviated as ADHD) is usually considered to be a neurobehavioral developmental disorder. It affects about 3-5% of school-aged children with symptoms starting before seven years of age. It is characterized by a persistent pattern of impulsiveness and inattention, with or without a component of hyperactivity. ADHD occurs twice as commonly in boys as in girls. ADHD is generally a chronic disorder with 10 to 40% of individuals diagnosed in childhood continuing to meet diagnostic criteria in adulthood. As they mature, adolescents and adults with ADHD are likely to develop coping mechanisms to compensate for their impairment. Though previously regarded as a childhood diagnosis ADHD can continue throughout adulthood and has a strong genetic component.

Being an ESL teacher, one should have the eye to notice and identify some of the learning disorders (LDs). Wikipedia lists out eight learning disorders:

1. Dyslexia, a reading disability
2. Dyscalculia, a math disability
3. Dysgraphia, a writing disability
4. Developmental articulation disorder

5. Developmental expressive language disorder

6. Developmental receptive language disorder

7. Motor skills disorders

8. ADD, ADHD often occurs in these children

Among these we have discussed the important ones and their symptomatic behaviors. Diagnosis for the disorders mentioned above needs special training and knowledge. Taking a second opinion from a specialist is better before sharing your doubt with the parents. It is always advisable to send such learners to a professional psychologist. Of course, care and attention will help but to keep the teacher on the safer side, an expert’s opinion is more reliable. A little knowledge is dangerous; and hence a thorough evaluation and insight into the problem of the adolescent should precede before categorizing a person. Once the problem is identified it is better to refer the case to a clinical psychologist with the parents’ consent. Promoting learner autonomy demands more insight into the psychological problems of the learners because addressing individual difference is one of the main concerns of autonomous learning.

A common theme in justifications for autonomy, not only in general education but also in language learning, is that autonomous learners become more highly
motivated and that autonomy leads to better, more effective work. Knowles’ claim is illustrative: “…there is convincing evidence that people who take the initiative in learning (proactive learners) learn more things and learn better than do people who sit at the feet of teachers, passively waiting to be taught (reactive learners)… They enter into learning more purposefully and with greater motivation” (1975:p.14). What is the link between autonomy and motivation? The writing on motivation in relation to language learning over the past several years has been dominated by the social-psychological approach to motivation of Gardner and his associates, which gives little help in attempts to link autonomy and motivation. To find such links it is necessary to turn to the literature on motivation in general education, and especially the literature on cognitive motivation. When we go through the literature on motivation, we will see that there is an important link between autonomy and some educational theories of motivation which could account for the claimed power of autonomy.

II. 4. Getting motivated in the ESL program

In recommending autonomy to learners, this study is making the assumption that taking an active, independent attitude to learning and independently undertaking a learning task, are beneficial to learning; that somehow, personal involvement in decision making leads to more effective learning. This is not a
universal view. Some teachers and researchers either articulate or demonstrate beliefs which are in conflict with those concerning learner autonomy. Thus the claims of the desirability and effectiveness of learner autonomy need to be justified through convincing arguments.

What arguments might be offered? One would be to argue that a measure of individual involvement in decision making in one’s own learning enhances motivation to learn, and it is this link between autonomy and motivation that is being investigated. Cognitive motivation is the most promising model of motivation for this purpose, but there has been little published research into second language learning and cognitive motivation. Consequently we will have to review research from general education and show that there is evidence that learners’ active and independent involvement in their own learning (autonomy) increases motivation to learn and consequently increases learning effectiveness.


The intrinsic-extrinsic motivation theory claims that learners who are interested in learning tasks and outcomes for their own sake (intrinsic) rather than for rewards are likely to become more effective learners. Two important
conditions for the development of intrinsic motivation are: first, that learners perceive the learning environment to be “informational” rather than “controlling” – that is that the environment supports the learner through informative rather than evaluative feedback. The second is that the learning context is autonomy supporting in that if facilitates self-determination on the part of the learner.

The second theory reviewed – the attribution theory of motivation – relates motivation to the reasons the learner believes are responsible for his success or failure. There is evidence to suggest that those learners who believe that success or failure results from “fixed” causes such as ability, or causes which the learner sees as external to his such as task difficulty, tend not to persist when they fail and so overall are less successful than they might be. By contrast, people who believe that success or failure results from their own efforts tend to take responsibility for their own learning and persist after failure. Not surprisingly, such learners tend to be more effective than those who assume that success derives from fixed ability (either you have it or you do not). Furthermore, it seems to be the case that learning success strengthens the learning confidence only of those who accept responsibility for their own success (Dickinson :1995. pp.165-6):
This raises the question of the relationship between success in learning and motivation. Does high motivation lead to success or does success enhance motivation, or is there a synergistic relationship – motivation leads to success which leads to increased motivation which leads to greater success…?

Finally, what scope is there for influencing motivation in individuals?

The Carnegie Project (DeCharms, 1984) claims that motivation of learners can be enhanced through encouraging learners to exert personal control over their learning and to take responsibility for their learning. The means used by the Carnegie Project to enhance motivation are very similar to aspects of learner preparation for autonomy, and so such preparation may serve to enhance learners’ motivation for learning. Each of these theories presents evidence that learning autonomy increases motivation and consequently increases learning effectiveness.

The adoption by language teachers of the additional objective of helping learners to attain some measure of autonomy is frequently justified in the literature by variations on one or more of three arguments; the formulation given below is taken from Little (1991) but similar arguments can be found in, for example, Holec (1981) and Dickinson (1987):
Because the learner sets the agenda, learning should be more focused and more purposeful, and thus more effective both immediately and in the longer term;

Because responsibility for the learning process lies with the learner, the barriers between learning and living that are often found in traditional teacher-led educational structures should not arise;

If there are no barriers between learning and living, learners should have little difficulty in transferring their capacity for autonomous behavior to all other areas of their lives, and this should make them more useful members of society and more effective participants in the democratic process. (p.8)

In general education the claim that (some measure of) autonomy is linked with more effective learning is often expressed more strongly. Wang and Peverly (1986), for example, review findings of strategy research (in subjects other than languages) and conclude that independent or autonomous learners are those who have the capacity for being active and independent in the learning process; they can identify goals, formulate their own goals, and can change goals to suit their own learning needs and interests; they are able to use learning strategies, and to monitor their own learning.
In the applied linguistics literature, autonomy is also seen as a capacity for active, independent learning. Little (1991), for example, sees autonomy as a “capacity – for detachment, critical reflection, decision making and independent action” (p.4). Holec (1985) also sees autonomy as a capacity; Holec writes of “autonomization” as “a matter of acquiring those capacities which are necessary to carry out a self-directed learning program” (p.180).

Autonomous learners have a capacity for critical reflection and decision making, as well as the skills necessary to carry out a self-directed learning program, i.e. the ability to define objectives, define contents and so on (Little, 1991:p.14)

In addition, autonomy can be seen as an attitude towards learning in which the learner is prepared to take, or does take, responsibility for his own learning. To take responsibility for one’s own learning essentially concerns decision making about one’s own learning (Dickinson, 1993: p.330). The understanding of autonomy as a capacity or attitude rather than as an overt action (where, for example, the autonomous learner is seen as one who necessarily implements the decision referred to above), is important since we want to be able to conceive of learners maintaining learning autonomy in a teacher-directed classroom setting as well as in settings such as self-access learning centers.

There is a curious scarcity of reported research into motivation in language education, and such research that is reported may be felt to lack “validity in that
it is not well-grounded in the real world domain of the SL classroom, nor is it well-connected to other related educational research…” (Crookes and Schmidt, 1991: p.470). The area of motivation in language learning over the past 20 years or so has been dominated by the social-psychological approach of Gardner and his associates. As is well known, the socio-psychological approach links motivation with attitudes towards the community of speakers of the target language, and claims that learners with an interest in interacting with such speakers – integrative motivation – are likely to be more successful in learning the target language than those who are doing so for instrumental reasons.

As said earlier, the general model of motivation considered in this paper is frequently referred to in the educational literature as “cognitive motivation”. Definitions of cognitive motivation are concerned inter alia with what learners are prepared to learn – the topic, and with how much effort they are prepared to exert in order to learn it. Two snappy definitions quoted by Wang and Palincsar (1989) touch on these factors: “The skill and will to learn” (Paris and Oka, 1986) and “Purposeful striving” (Snow and Farr, 1983), while Keller’s definition captures these factors clearly: “Motivation refers to the choices people make as to what experiences or goals they will approach or avoid, and the degree of effort they will exert in that respect” (Keller in Crookes and Schmidt, 1991:p.389).
II. 5. Interface between autonomy and motivation

Let us now relate autonomy to accounts of motivation in an attempt to support the claims made about the efficacy of learning autonomy. Dickinson (1995) is of the opinion that several areas of research into motivation in general education suggest that motivation to learn and learning effectiveness can be increased in learners who take responsibility for their own learning, who understand and accept that their learning success is a result of effort, and that failure can be overtaken with greater effort and better use of strategies as Wang and Palincsar (1989) believe. Similarly, motivation tends to be higher in learners who are interested in the learning tasks and the learning outcomes for their own sake rather than for rewards that result from success (Deci and Ryan, 1985); and who focus on learning outcomes rather than performance outcomes (Dweck, 1986). Many of the brief definitions of learner motivation and the concepts circling motivation (for example, learner independence, learner responsibility and learner choice) are also central in discussions of learner autonomy. If we refer back to the brief definitions of learner autonomy which is quoted above, we will see that they all share certain key concepts. These are learner independence, learner responsibility and learner choice. Incorporated within these, or entailed by them are other concepts such as decision making, critical reflection and detachment, all of which are important in cognitive motivation.
Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation link to autonomy and this link can be perceived in the work of Deci and Ryan (1985), which has been cited earlier. They distinguish between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation: people who are intrinsically motivated in doing an activity are doing it for its own sake rather than because of external pressure or promise of reward for doing it. Extrinsic motivation refers to learning situations where the reason for doing a task is something other than an interest in the task (or broader learning endeavor) itself. In addition, undertaking the task may be something the person feels pressured to do rather than genuinely wants to do (Deci and Ryan, 1985:p.35). The distinction is illustrated in Dickinson (1995):

Suppose there is a language learner who is taking classes in the target language; part of the class concerns pronunciation. Before each lesson she focuses on the need to practice, and the thought of not practicing invokes in her a sense of guilt and anticipatory anxiety. These feelings lead her to practice before each lesson and when she finishes practicing she is relieved and experiences satisfaction at being prepared. However, if she fails to practice, the guilt and bad feelings are exacerbated, and these feelings are made worse by her knowledge that the teacher expects the students to practice and can be quite sharp with those who have not done so. For this girl, both her own feelings and
the class environment constitute “controlling” structures, and her motivation is extrinsic.

The above mentioned girl’s friend also practices before each lesson, but she focuses on the satisfaction which will accrue from improving her pronunciation. In reflecting on her homework in practicing pronunciation it is not the thought that she should practice which motivates her, but rather the anticipation of mastering a new sound contrast and improving her communication skills. Even though practicing is not always intrinsically enjoyable, she is self-determined in it because she personally values improving her pronunciation. Furthermore, she is able to perceive the teacher’s feedback as “informational”, helping her to judge how well she has mastered the target objectives.

When the vacation comes, the students are free to do as they please since the teacher has left no homework to be done. The first girl experiences relief from the tension and burden she feels before each class and takes a break from practicing. By contrast, her friend who is intrinsically motivated has not felt any particular tension and continues to be motivated to practice. (Adapted by Dickinson from Deci and Ryan, 1985:pp.106-7)

It is claimed that intrinsic motivation leads to more effective learning and that it is promoted in circumstances in which the learner has a measure of self-determination and where the locus of control is clearly with the learner. Studies
of Deci and Ryan and those of other researchers which support this view conclude that when conditions are created that facilitate intrinsic motivation, in particular those that are autonomy supporting, students' learning, especially conceptual learning and creative thinking, increases dramatically relative to that of students in settings that foster extrinsically oriented learning.

The theory which they (Deci and Ryan) have developed on the basis of these studies is that the promotion of more corrective learning is achieved both through learners being intrinsically motivated and through the learners operating in "autonomy supporting and informational conditions", and that these conditions will themselves enhance intrinsic motivation. The key argument in Deci and Ryan's theory is that self-determination leads to intrinsic motivation. Self-determination is where the locus of causality for behavior is internal to the learner, and can be seen as related to the applied linguistic concept of autonomy (noted above) in its sense of a capacity for and an attitude towards learning. Related to self-determination, and a condition of it, is that learners operate in informational structures and experience informational events rather than controlling structures and events. Informational structures are those that facilitate independence in learning, offering the learner opportunities for choice and decision making and in general promoting his self-determining status. Informational events occur when, for example, the teacher's class management
strategies and feedback offer the students opportunities to exercise a degree of autonomy. By contrast, controlling structures are those in which the locus of control rests with someone other than the learner, most likely the teacher. Controlling events are such things as grades, rewards and so on. But the ultimate aim of autonomous learning targets the learner to take control of his learning.

A curious, though significant, research finding related to these concepts is that offering rewards to learners who were previously intrinsically motivated can have the effect of reducing intrinsic motivation (and thereby perhaps diminishing the effectiveness of learning) (deCharms, 1984; p.279; Deci and Ryan, 1985:p.90). Consequently, doubt is cast on the efficacy of using frequent testing and grades to encourage learning. The bold decision taken by the general education department of Kerala to minimize the number of tests is in accordance with this view, though the teachers and parents skeptically look at this change in pedagogy.

However, Deci and Ryan recognize, as we all must, that there are frequently circumstances, especially in the education of children, when extrinsic motivation is the predominant possibility, as when children are being introduced to learning knowledge and skills which they have no intrinsic wish to learn. In introductory foreign/second language learning in formal settings, for example, it is usually
necessary to use extrinsic incentives and controlling events to coerce children to learn sufficient of the language to develop intrinsic motivation.

The effect of tests, grades and feedback devices generally appears to depend on how they are perceived by individual learners. Some learners (probably those who are primarily focused on learning and learning objectives) are able to perceive grades and feedback as informational events, that is, these learners do not perceive them as threatening their self-determination and regard them as providing useful information for further decision making. Others (probably those who are focused on demonstrating achievements – valuing high grades for the status rather than as an indication of the learning achieved) perceive tests and grades as controlling, shifting the locus of control to the teacher and reducing the learners' self-determination'. (Deci and Ryan, 1985).

This distinction between these two broad categories of learners is developed in attribution theory, which will be examined shortly in this chapter.

Gardener and his associates’ constructs of integrative and instrumental attitudes to the target language can be related to the more general distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation(Dickinson :1995). Integrative attitudes (or motivation), with its emphasis on learning the target language because one wishes to associate with or integrate with the speakers of the language, can be perceived as a subject-specific example of intrinsic motivation. Learners with an
integrative attitude have a compelling purpose for learning which is intrinsic to the target language. Similarly, instrumental attitude (or motivation) with its emphasis on “rewards” such as improved career prospects, university entry, or certification has apparent links with extrinsic motivation, with its emphasis on rewards for achievement (p. 170).

We have seen that the intrinsic/extrinsic theory of motivation explicitly relates motivation to autonomy, and intrinsic motivation (which leads to greater learning effectiveness) is promoted and enhanced in circumstances in which learners have the opportunity to take responsibility for learning (self-determination). This is facilitated in instructional settings offering informational structures, where, for example, the class management and even, perhaps, the learning mode, encourage learner independence. At the adolescence, and also in our present settings, learner independence is only a question of course of time rather than a decision on the part of the adult society.

II. 6. Attribution theory and its implications

Attribution theory (Weiner, 1980, 1992) is probably the most influential contemporary theory with implications for academic motivation. It incorporates behavior modification in the sense that it emphasizes the idea that learners are strongly motivated by the pleasant outcome of being able to feel good about themselves. It incorporates cognitive theory and self-efficacy theory in the sense
that it emphasizes that learners’ current self-perceptions will strongly influence
the ways in which they will interpret the success or failure of their current efforts
and hence their future tendency to perform these same behaviors. An important
assumption of attribution theory is that people will interpret their environment in
such a way as to maintain a positive self-image. That is, they will attribute their
successes or failures to factors that will enable them to feel as good as possible
about themselves. In general, this means that when learners succeed at an
academic task, they are likely to want to attribute this success to their own efforts
or abilities; but when they fail, they will want to attribute their failure to factors
over which they have no control, such as bad teaching or bad luck. The basic
principle of attribution theory as it applies to motivation is that a person’s own
perceptions or attributions for success or failure determine the amount of effort
the person will expend on that activity in the future.

In order to take responsibility for our own learning we must believe that we
have control over learning success and failure, and consequently attribution
theory has important implications for the promotion of autonomy. The central
tenet of attribution theory is the learner’s perception of the cause of his or her
success or failure and the influence this has on perceptions of future
performance. Four possible causes have emerged from projects concerned with
asking learners for their opinions on the reasons for success and failure, and
these are usually categorized according to stability (i.e. whether it can be changed or not), internal or external to the learner, and whether the learner can control it (Dickinson, 1995). The four causes are:

- Ability (internal and stable)
- Task difficult (external and stable)
- Effort (internal, changeable and under the learner’s control)
- Luck (external, changeable but not under the learner’s control)

According to Child’s (1994) account, pupils who attribute their failure to stable causes tend not to persist when they fail, but those who believe that their failure is due to unstable or internal causes – particularly effort, tend to persist in the face of failure. Furthermore, this view that failure is the result of not trying hard enough tends to carry over to future tasks, and so these learners are seen as the more highly motivated. In addition, they tend to achieve more than those who believe success or failure is outside their control (Skehan, 1989; Crooke and Schmidt, 1991). There is also evidence to suggest that for those learners who accept responsibility for success, that is, who attribute their success to effort, learning success enhances their self-perception of competence. This success leads to enhanced motivation, which increases the possibility of success. However, this is not the case for those who believe that their success is the result of factors outside their control (Wang and Palincsar, 1989). One way,
then, of improving the learning effectiveness of some learners would be to help
them to recognize that factors within their control may be responsible for their
success or failure.

Success in learning, then, appears to lead to greater motivation only for those
students who accept responsibility for their own learning success, that is, who
recognize that success arises from personal effort, rather than simply from ability
or change. Personal effort, unlike ability and chance is within the control of the
student. Furthermore, success enhances motivation only in children who are
focused on learning goals – that is, who are intrinsically motivated. In
adolescents success is not the only motivating factor.

Attribution theory relates to learning autonomy in that it provides evidence to
show that learners who believe that they have control over their learning – that
by accepting new challenges they can increase their ability to perform learning
tasks and so increase their intelligence – tend to be more successful than others.

There is some discussion in the motivational literature on the causal
relationship between success in learning and motivation. Ellis (1985) comments
that “we do not know whether it is motivation that produces successful learning
or successful learning that enhances motivation” (p.119). Skehan (1989)
reviews research into the relationship between success and the psycho-
sociological model of motivation and concludes that the balance of the evidence is slightly in favor of the view that motivation produces successful learning rather than vice versa.

From within an educational perspective of motivation, as concerned with “the choices people make as to what experiences or goals they will approach or avoid, and the degree of effort they will exert in that respect” (Keller, op.cit.) the resolution of the problem may be clearer. As noted above, Wang and Palincsar (1989) assert that for learners who accept responsibility for their own learning successes and failures, success enhances their own self-perception of competence, and so enhances their motivation. Deci and Ryan (1985) quote Harter and Connell (1984) in suggesting that “improved learning will have the additional effect of further enhancing intrinsic motivation, thereby creating a kind of positively synergistic effect”. These researchers, then, argue that success in learning enhances motivation and this in turn increases the likelihood of further success.

Dweck (1986) stresses that learning success alone is not enough to create and/or enhance productive motivational attitudes. The important issue is whether the learners are striving after performance goals or learning goals. Learners who achieve continued success on even personally difficult tasks, but within a performance framework – that is, striving after high grades, gold stars,
or peer and teacher acclaim, tend not to develop stable confidence, a challenge-seeking attitude and persistence. Indeed she reports research which indicates that the effect is sometimes to lower learners’ confidence in their ability. In order to develop and enhance productive motivation, learners require procedures which “incorporate challenge, and even failure, within a learning-orientated context”. In addition, they require procedures that are concerned with underlying causes of motivation. For example, teaching children to attribute their failures of effort or strategy instead of ability has been shown to produce sizeable changes in persistence in the face of failure (Dweck 1986:p.1046).

Thus, there appears to be reciprocal reinforcement between success and motivation for learners who take responsibility for their own learning and for those who are concerned with learning objectives.

II.7. Instruction in motivation- enhancing: An experimental study

Dweck’s suggestion that learners with less successful motivations – and who are consequently less successful than they might be – could be trained to adopt a more effective model of motivation, has been the aim of a number of schemes. One which claims a great deal of success was the Carnegie Project, directed by DeCharms (1984). The aim of the Carnegie Project was to enhance the motivation of low income, black, elementary school children in St.Louise, USA. Measures of motivation and academic achievement were obtained on the pupils
at the end of each school year for four years from the fifth to eight grades. The experimental treatment involved training teachers in motivation who then taught the children in the sixth and seventh grades and used motivation-enhancing exercises in their classrooms. The experimental group (N = 57) received motivational training in their classrooms and the regular curriculum throughout the year from their own teachers who had been trained in motivation. The control (N = 50) received only the regular curriculum from teachers who were not trained in motivation.

The motivational model used by DeCharms in the Carnegie Project had similarities to Deci and Ryan’s (1985) intrinsic/extrinsic model and attribution theory. DeCharms argues that successful learners are those who perceive themselves to be in control of their learning. Learners who tended to exert personal control of their learning were dubbed ‘origins’, “because of the strong sense or origination of our own actions”, and those who tended to respond to external causation – to be externally pushed around – were dubbed ‘pawns’. (DeCharms stresses that we are all origins some of the time and pawns some of the time) (DeCharms 1984: p.278).

The motivational training aimed to help the children to reduce their pawn behavior and build up their origin behavior through developing realistic goal setting, planning personal responsibility, feelings of personal causation and self-
confidence and by making children aware of negative feelings associated with being pushed around. There was a marked improvement in origin measures for the experimental group and no improvement for the controls. The improvement in origin/pawn scores for the experimental group was maintained for at least a year after the project. The experimental group also made significant improvements in measures of academic achievement.

The similarities between origins and autonomous learners are so evident as to imply that two different labels are being used to name the same individual learner characteristics. In both cases, the individuals are concerned to control their own learning and to take responsibility for it. The similarities between the goals of the motivational enhancement training in the Carnegie Project and learner-training for language learners are also striking. Each adopts the aims of realistic goal setting, planning, persuading learners to adopt personal responsibility for their learning, and each attempts to encourage feelings of personal causation and self confidence.

It has been shown that there is substantial evidence from cognitive motivational studies that learning success and enhanced motivation is conditional on learners taking responsibility for their own learning, being able to control their own learning and perceiving that their learning successes or failures are to be attributed to their own efforts and strategies rather than to factors
outside their control. Each of these conditions is characteristic of learner autonomy as it is described in applied linguistics.

Beghetto (2004) argues that learning also involves the cultivation of adaptive motivational beliefs. To the extent that students develop adaptive motivational beliefs, they are more likely to seek out challenges, take risks, persist in the face of difficulty, and ultimately demonstrate higher levels of achievement. Given the relationship between motivational beliefs and subsequent academic outcomes, teachers need to ensure that they are monitoring this component of student motivation as part of their overall assessment of students, which will be detailed in Chapter IV.

II.8. Goal orientation

When thinking of assessing motivation, two other terms need mentioning: goal orientation and motivational beliefs. Over the past 20 years, one of the most active areas of research on students’ motivational beliefs has been the investigation of achievement goal orientations. Goal orientations are students’ reasons for engaging in or avoiding achievement-directed behavior. These goal orientations are important because they serve as the basis for how students define their own competence (Pintrich & Schunk, 2002). Students’ goal orientations are context-sensitive and can be influenced by classroom
procedures, practices, and policies (Ames, 1992). Researchers have distinguished two types of goal orientations, typically labeled ‘mastery goals’ and ‘performance goals’. Recently, motivational theorists have further distinguished achievement goal orientations to highlight how each has an ‘approach’ and ‘avoidance’ component (Elliot, 1999).

The following three configurations of goal orientations have received the most attention in the research literature: mastery-approach goals, performance-avoid goals, and performance-approach goals. Students who have mastery-approach goals define competence in terms of self-improvement and self-set standards. When engaged in achievement-directed behavior, they focus on learning, skill development, creativity, and understanding. The empirical evidence suggests that when students approach achievement tasks with a mastery orientation, they experience a variety of desirable outcomes: enhanced interest in learning, more positive attitudes toward learning, viewing of errors as informational, attribution of failure to lack of effort (rather than lack of ability), academic engagement and effort, perseverance in the face of challenges, more risk-taking, and asking for assistance when needed (Pintrich & Schunk, 2002).

Students holding performance-avoid goals, on the other hand, are focused on avoiding looking dumb, stupid, or less able than other students. Students with these goals are concerned with protecting their self-worth at all costs.
Consequently they are more likely to engage in self-sabotaging behaviors, such as cheating, avoiding help when they need it, and withdrawing effort (Urdan, Ryan, Anderman, Gheen, 2002). In addition to self-sabotaging behaviors, this maladaptive set of motivational beliefs has been linked to a variety of undesirable outcomes. For example, students who have performance-avoid goals are more likely to view errors as indicating a lack of ability, experience high levels of anxiety, exert less effort, place less value on tasks, give up in the face of difficulty, and ultimately demonstrate lower levels of achievement (Pintrich & Schunk, 2002). Teachers who are unaware of this particular psychological state of mind of the learners treat the adolescents as nuisance. In most of the cases these adolescents are compelled to leave the formal set up of educational institutions, seeking admission elsewhere.

Finally, students holding performance-approach goals engage in achievement behaviors for the purpose of demonstrating their ability, besting others, and obtaining recognition (Pintrich & Schunk, 2002). Students with a performance-approach orientation define competence in relation to others (e.g., getting the highest grade).

The empirical evidence for outcomes associated with performance-approach goals is less clear than that of mastery-approach and performance-avoid goals. For example, researchers have found a link between performance-approach
goals and desirable outcomes, such as high levels of performance and achievement as measured by grades. However, the results on other outcomes are less favorable. For example, a performance-approach goal orientation has been linked to anxiety during evaluation (Elliot, 1999; Pintrich & Schunk, 2002). Given these mixed outcomes, some researchers feel that general statements linking performance-approach goals with positive achievement outcomes are not yet warranted (Beghetto 2004).

In short, scholars have come to recognize that students have varying combinations of achievement goals. Researchers therefore have been busily examining combinations of goal orientations, across varying contexts, to determine which pattern of goal orientations are most optimal in particular situations. At this point, it is safe to say that a mastery goal orientation leads to generally desirable achievement outcomes for students, whereas a performance-avoidance goal orientation leads to maladaptive beliefs and outcomes (Beghetto: 2004).

Students’ motivational beliefs are important because achievement goal orientations influence academic outcomes, it is important that teachers monitor and cultivate adaptive motivational beliefs in their students. Besides being a means to enhancing academic achievement, cultivating adaptive goal orientations is a worthwhile instructional goal in and of itself. Stiggins (2001)
explains, “[W]e cannot separate affect and achievement from one another in the classroom. As teachers, we must know how to help students develop academically empowering dispositions” (p. 340). Stiggins is not alone in this view. Researchers, here and abroad have been developing new modes of assessment that take into consideration the relationship between students’ motivational beliefs and academic achievement.

Beghetto (op.cited) quotes a few examples to illustrate why classroom teachers need to monitor students’ goal orientations when evaluating the success of their instructional efforts:

Consider a teacher who relies heavily on timed skill and drill worksheets to improve students’ standardized test scores in math. Even though test scores might initially increase, students who once held an adaptive goal orientation toward math may now feel pressured to succeed, fear they can no longer be successful at math, and do everything they can to avoid looking “dumb” (e.g., engage in cheating or some form of self-sabotage). In rendering a judgment of whether the instructional approach was a success, we would need to weigh the negative impact on students’ achievement goal orientations against the positive gains in test scores. Conversely, consider how favorable an outcome it would be for a student
who, after spending a year in a teacher’s classroom, feels like – for the first time in her academic career – she can be successful in science, personally values the topic, and wants to understand and learn more.

The role of the teacher becomes crucial during adolescence. ‘Handle with care’ goes the warning of this critical period.

II. 9. Autonomy through motivation and goal orientation

To make learners autonomous, achievement goal orientations and motivational beliefs play a complementary role. Teachers have both the opportunity and the responsibility for cultivating healthy motivational beliefs in their students. By fostering beliefs grounded in positive goal orientations, teachers will increase the likelihood that their classroom will be a dynamic, high achieving learning environment. Programs should be adapted to the maturation, transformations, and transitions that adolescent students experience. As mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, adolescents experience rapid physical, cerebral, and hormonal change that is often destabilizing. Among the transformations or passages that they must address, the most important is establishing and confirming a personal, stable identity. Key features of this formation are the development of reflection, character, and competence. The major transition they face is from dependent childhood to independent early
adulthood in which they must secure new freedom and meet the responsibilities that go with it. Autonomous learning programs should be designed to cultivate the successful accomplishment of these changes in the pursuit of excellence as a person.

II. 10. Conclusion

The characteristic features of adolescents have been explored with specific focus on learner autonomy and motivation. Before concluding this chapter, it is necessary to see the line of argument as more of a cognitive perspective rather than behavioral or emotional. In the current climate of adolescent development we need to go beyond the widely used measures of autonomy which address behaviors and emotions. As Kegan (1994) outlines, ultimately our expectations for adolescents will not be satisfied if they act independently. Likewise our expectations will not be satisfied if they become emotionally independent. The only area of independence for adolescents that will both satisfy adults and aid adolescents in making informed decisions is an ability to think for themselves. So in the coming chapters this study explores the means through which the adolescents can be guided to attain learning autonomy or in other words to make them think of how they learn, and how to learn to learn.