Affective Variables in Second Language Performance

Chapter II

Affective Variables in Second Language Performance

2.1. Introduction

The process of learning a second language is one that calls for a total commitment from the learner. A total physical, intellectual and emotional response is necessary to successfully send and receive linguistic messages. Language is inextricably bound up with virtually every aspect of human behaviour. It is therefore difficult to isolate the component parts of second language acquisition; it is even more difficult to treat one of those components—the affective domain—without reference to other domains. Nevertheless, it is possible to speak of affective or emotional factors in second language learning with some degree of precision, as long as that precision presupposes the inter-relationship of the dynamics of human behaviour. Human behaviour in general is dominated by emotion and the affective domain is crucial in governing a person’s success in second language learning. We must acknowledge that while all the optimal cognitive factors may be operating, the learner can fail because of an affective block. These days there is an increasing awareness of the necessity to examine the human personality to find answers to perplexing problems in language learning. Research studies by Gardner and Lambert (Attitude and Motivation), Lukamani (Motivation) and Guiora, et al. (The effects; Empathy and Second language learning) have, on a theoretical level, provided insights into the role of the
affective domain in language learning. It appears that unsuccessful language learning can be attributed largely to affective blocks of various kinds. Affective factors include a large number of variables, starting from the self-centric factors to the exterior world of social interactions and interpersonal communications. The following are the major factors, which constitute the affective domain in language learning.

2.2. Self-centric or Ego-centric Factors

It is rather easy to claim that cognitive and affective endeavour will fail without a certain amount of self-confidence, knowledge of the self and belief in one's own capability for that endeavour. Every normal human child is born with certain optimal innate abilities that are either enhanced or reduced by the conditions of the environment in which he is placed. In the process of development, the human child becomes aware of his physical boundaries and is able to distinguish himself from the objective world around him. The development of personality means the development of a person's concept of self, acceptance of self and reflection of self on others as seen in the interaction between self and others.

2.2.1. Self-esteem

The most important knowledge of the world is perhaps the knowledge of the 'self' as the 'self' is the centre of the universe for an individual. The whole world pivots round the 'self' and is understood, appreciated and conditioned by the attitude of the
‘self’. Therefore, our comprehension of the universe originates from the knowledge of the ‘self’—‘self-centric’.

A major factor related to the thinking and feeling human organism is his ‘ego’. The self-knowledge, self-esteem and self-confidence of the language learner could have everything to do with success in learning a language. Guiora, et al. (*Empathy and second language learning*) proposed the notion of “language ego” to refer to the very personal, egoistic nature of second language learning. Any language learning process that results in meaningful learning for communication involves some degree of identity conflict regardless of the age and motivation of the learner. The very definition of communication implies a process of revealing one’s self to another. Break down in communication often results from a person’s unwillingness to be ‘honest’ in revealing his self. A strong language ego is thus conceivably positively correlated with success in second language learning. According to Ausubel (*Educational Psychology*), one of the key factors contributing to motivation for any task is a basic ego-enhancement drive: a person diligently strives for those things that tend to build or restore self-esteem. Research on ego-enhancement further defines how to appeal to ego-enhancement and how to incorporate ego-enhancing variables into methods and materials for language teaching.

Malinowski (*The Problem of Meaning*) has noted that all of us have a need for phatic communion—defining ourselves and finding acceptance in expressing that self in relation to others. Personality
development universally involves the growth of a person's concept of self, acceptance of self and reflection of self as seen in the interaction of self and others.

The worth that persons place upon themselves is commonly referred to as self-esteem. People derive a sense of self-esteem from the accumulation of experiences with themselves and with others and the assessment of the external world around them. Global self-esteem is general and relatively stable in adults. Specific self-esteem refers to one's appraisal of one's self in certain life situations like social interaction and varies depending upon the situation. Task self-esteem relates to particular tasks within specific situations. In the context of second language learning, global self-esteem refers to the classroom situation in general, specific self-esteem to second language acquisition itself and task self-esteem to one's self-evaluation of a particular aspect of the process speaking, writing or even a special kind of classroom exercise. Brodkey and Shore (Student Personality) and Gardner and Lambert (Attitude and Motivation) included measures of self-esteem in their studies of success in language learning and concluded that self-esteem is an important variable in second language acquisition.

2.2.2. Self-actualisation

Self-actualisation persons are human beings in their fullest capacity and communicating in a second language means communicating one's self in countless ways in the fullest capacity. Some highly sophisticated methods of language teaching have failed
to develop communicativeness in the learner because they have overlooked the importance of spontaneity and creativity in successfully sending and interpreting linguistic messages with variations.

Successful communication in a language may mean spontaneous and creative expression in sending out linguistic messages and an impulsive understanding of the incoming messages. A second language learner with self-actualisation as the target can achieve a fair amount of creativity in the language and this is the highest stage of self-realization that is attained at an advanced level of second language learning.

2.2.3. Inhibition

All human beings, in their understanding of themselves, build sets of defences to protect the ego. Children do not have inhibition but as they grow up, they learn to differentiate themselves from others and search for self-identity. In adolescence, there occur physical, emotional and cognitive changes giving rise to a system of affective traits and they develop mounting defensive inhibition to ward off feelings that challenge their self-esteem. An adult second language learner develops such inhibition towards a second language, as he is apprehensive of losing his self-esteem when required to take on a new identity in the process.

Some persons—those with higher self-esteem and ego strength—are more able to withstand threats to their existence and thus their defences are lower. Those with
weaker self-esteem maintain walls of inhibition to
protect a weak or fragile ego or a lack of self-
confidence in a situation or task. (Brown16)

Meaningful language learning involves some degree of
identity conflict and an adaptive language ego enables the learner to
lower the inhibitions that may impede success.

Guiora, et al. (Empathy and second language learning) has
produced one of the few studies on inhibition in relation to second
language learning. Guiora designed an experiment using small
quantities of alcohol to induce temporary states of less than normal
inhibition in an experimental group of subjects. Performance of the
alcohol-induced subjects on a pronunciation test in Thai was
significantly better than the performance of a control group. Guiora
concluded that a direct relationship existed between inhibition and
ability in second language. There were some serious lapses in his
conclusion: alcohol may lower inhibitions but alcohol also tends to
affect muscular tension, and the latter may have been a more
important factor than the former in the superior performance of
alcohol-induced subjects. The works of Curran (Counseling
Learning), Begin (Evaluative and Emotional Factors) and La Forge
(Community language) are excellent attempts to demonstrate the
notion that inhibition may be one of the key obstacles to any
learning that necessitates communication or interaction with another
person.
Steps have been initiated in second language teaching methodology to reduce inhibition and Curran's counselling learning and community language learning are the most popular and successful products of this endeavour where the learners take part in language learning activity in an atmosphere free from inhibition (Counseling Learning).

2.2.4. Mistakes

That language learning necessitates the making of mistakes is common knowledge. A learner tests his language ability by trial and error and progress can be achieved only by learning from mistakes. If a learner never ventures to use the target language until he is absolutely certain of its correctness, then he would never communicate productively. Mistakes pose both internal and external threats. Internally, when the learner commits a mistake, his critical self will be in conflict with his performing self and he becomes critical of his own mistakes. Externally, the learner perceives others exercising their judgement on him and his mistakes. Earl Stevick (Memory, Meaning and Method) spoke of language learning as involving a number of forms of alienation—alienation between the critical self and performing self, between the native culture and the target culture, between the learner and the teacher and between the learner and his fellow learners—which arise from the defences built by the learner. These defences do not facilitate learning, rather inhibit learning and their removal promotes language learning, which involves self-exposure to a certain degree.
2.3. Transactional Factors

We are 'social animals' whose identity is an integral part of the way we interpret others' responses to us. Language provides us with the means of making the transactions necessary for shaping this identity.

Many of the language teaching methods have failed to achieve their goal because they have either overlooked this social nature of language or have considered socially oriented problems in language learning as a matter of acculturation.

Empathy, ego permeability and imitation are crucial in transactional affectivity and deserve serious attention, as they are responsible in bringing about successful communication. With the recent emphasis on 'communicative competence', these factors have greater relevance today. To define the term communicative competence it is essential to take into account the findings of developmental psychology regarding the development of first language communicative competence. The ability to adapt one's communication develops at a later age and it develops at a slower pace than linguistic competence. This means that all persons are not equally communicatively competent although they are linguistically and socio-linguistically competent (Pramanik 26-28). The competence to adapt one's language to ever changing interpersonal communication does not depend merely on one's knowledge of appropriate socio-cultural rules of a language but also
on one's ability to judge the perspective of the other person involved in the speech situation.

2.3.1. Empathy

Guiora (1972) defines empathy as:

[. . .] a process of comprehending in which a temporary fusion of self-object boundaries, as in the earliest pattern of object relation, permits an immediate emotional apprehension of the affective experience of another, this sensing being used by the cognitive function to gain understanding of the others. (*Construct Validity 142*)

Empathy is the process of putting yourself into someone else's shoes, of reaching beyond the self and understanding and feeling what another person is understanding and feeling. It is probably the major factor in the harmonious co-existence of individuals in society. Language is one of the primary means of empathizing. Psychologists generally agree that there are two necessary aspects of the development and exercising of empathy: first, a self-awareness and self-knowledge of one's own feelings, and second, identification with another person or persons (Hogan, *Development of an empathy scale*).

In fact, empathy is a pre requisite for successfully receiving, interpreting and sending linguistic messages. Brown (*Affective factors*) makes it clear when he says:
Communication requires a sophisticated degree of empathy. In order to communicate effectively one needs to be able to understand the other person's affective and cognitive states; communication breaks down when false presumptions are made about the other person's state.

(119)

Thus, a high degree of empathy is predictive of success in second language learning. Guiora, et al. (*Empathy and second language*) suggests that ego-permeability is inducible which is encouraging for a language teacher. If an adult second language learner can have success in assuming childlike ego states, there exists greater ego-permeability and a wide scope for empathic communication.

Any communicative act involves certain knowledge about the structure of the language and the ability to make correct judgements about the emotional state of the participants in the communication. In order to make correct assumptions about the emotional state of another person, one has to surmount one's ego boundaries, or in Guiora's term, one has to permeate ego boundaries so as to send and receive linguistic messages clearly.

In second language learning the problem of empathy is more complex as the learner-speaker has to make correct assumptions in a language in which he is in secure. The learner-hearer attempting to comprehend a second language finds that his own affective and cognitive state is misjudged by the other person resulting in
communication breakdown. Curran's *(Counseling Learning)* community language learning is a brilliant example of building up empathy into second language methodology.

2.3.2. Imitation

Miller and Dollard's *(Social Learning and Imitation)* classic work on imitation integrated the concept of imitation into a behaviouristic framework and presented the problem as a major issue for learning theorists. Ausubel's *(Educational Psychology)* study of the school performance of "satellizers" (those who tend to attract imitators) and "non satellizers" (usually imitators of and dependents upon super ordinate figures) found important differences between the two types of individuals.

2.4. Personality Variables

Attention has been directed towards certain personality variables, which are relatively stable that affect successful language learning.

2.4.1. Field dependence/independence

This refers to the way individuals perceive and organise their world. Field dependent individuals tend to view their world as a total configuration and to be influenced by the whole field, while field independent individuals can separate parts of their environments from the total field. Brown has suggested that this factor represents a merger of cognitive and affective variables *(Development of First Language 231-244).* According to Witkin, et al. field dependent individuals are sensitive and found to be
outgoing and gregarious. But field independent people are self-sufficient and tend to be more successful second language learners as they are able to separate the language stimuli required to be learned from the total context while the field dependent ones tend to be distracted by the total learning environment (1127-45).

2.4.2. Sociability

Chastian (Affective and ability factors) obtained significant positive correlations between sociability and second language learning. Valette (Some reflections) found that young children who were “quick to learn a second language were the talkative, outgoing, easily adaptable and eager to express themselves”(92). Smart, et al. found that “social spontaneity differentiated over achievers from average achievers.” Over achievers were lower in social spontaneity than average achievers. “They do not enjoy social activities, prefer not to be in crowds do not spend their free time at social functions, seldom take the initiative at social gatherings, work better by themselves and prefer to work alone”(419).

2.4.3. Anxiety

Naiman, et al. (The Good Language Learner) demonstrates that learners with high levels of anxiety are less successful in learning second languages than more relaxed learners. Krashen (Second Language Acquisition) and Rivers (The Psychologist) consider anxiety as a potent deterrent to second language achievement. Learners who become anxious in the second language-learning context will be less successful than those who do not. The
construct of anxiety need not be general but instead specific to the language-learning context and it is this component that tends to interfere with language learning.

Personality may also influence the effectiveness of instruction. With regard to performance in second language, Krashen (The Monitor model) suggested that extrovert learners are likely to under use the Monitor—the knowledge the learner uses to consciously edit his errors—and introverts to overuse it. In general, however, the relationship between personality and learning styles is very speculative and it is not clear what type of personality will or will not benefit from formal instruction.

2.4.4. Extroversion and Introversion

Introversion refers to the tendency of an individual to withdraw from social interaction and be preoccupied with inner thoughts and feelings. Extroversion is the tendency to be outgoing and interested in people and things in the environment. This cult of extroversion is carried over to the language classroom and an amiable, talkative personality tends to be held up as axiomatically desirable and ideal from the standpoint of mental hygiene.

Educational psychologists tend to agree that a learner's extroversion and introversion may be a grossly misleading index of social adjustment (Ausubel 413). It is indicated that this variable has a strong basis on the cultural background and that the socio-linguistic expectations of that culture could significantly change such judgements.
A person may behave in an extroverted manner in order to protect his own ego, as extroverted behaviour signifies defensive barriers and high ego boundaries. The introverted, quieter, more reserved person may show high empathy—an intuitive understanding and appreciation of others—and be more reserved in the outward and overt expressions of empathy.

It is interesting to note the findings of the studies concluded in the same year 1975, contradicting each other. Pramanik presents the results of the study of Naiman, Frohlich and Stern and that of Chastain. The former found no significant correlation between scores on an extroversion/introversion scale and performance on listening comprehension or imitation task and the latter concluded that the reserved/outgoing does seem to be a significant factor in course grade (32). Two years later Hamayan (Affective factors) administered HSPQ (The junior-senior High School Personality Questionnaire) to students learning French as a second language. The questionnaire was designed to assess fourteen personality dimensions that included personality traits such as reserved-warm hearted and shy-adventurous. Learning a second language is more effective when the language is practised and as shy students may be less likely to practice it, they will attain less proficiency even in reading.

Extroverts are better second language learners due to other considerations. First, students who are branded introverts by teachers are not necessarily so, considering their cultural variations.
Covertly, they may be more open to share and comprehend although apparently they appear to be introverts. Second, extroversion may be a technique to protect a fragile ego. Introverts, though they appear reserved and unassuming, may display an intuitive understanding and apprehension of others. Third, extroversion may be predictive of success in the speaking of a second language but not in the other skills like listening, reading and writing.

2.5. Psychological Variables

2.5.1. Reflective/Impulsive

Psychological variables include basic personality tendencies towards impulsivity and reflectivity and determine the degree to which a person tends to make either a quick or gambling (impulsive) guess at an answer to a problem or a slower, more calculated (reflective) decision. It has been found that learners who are conceptually reflective tend to make fewer errors in reading than the impulsive learners (Kagan, Reflection-impulsivity) but the impulsive ones may be faster readers. Doron in a study discovered that reflective students were slower and more accurate than impulsive students (Reflectivity-impulsivity). Those with impulsive personalities go through a number of rapid transitions of semi-grammatical stages of inter language, while reflective learners tend to remain longer at a particular stage with larger leaps from stage to stage.
2.5.2. Aggression

Aggression can be defined as "a sequence of behaviour the goal of which [...] is injury of the person toward whom it is directed" (Dollard, et al. *Frustration and Aggression*). Freud's early theory of aggression maintained that it is a "primordial reaction" to frustration (*A General Introduction*). Aggression could be a central factor determining motivation and foreign language teaching methods may capitalize on aggressive behaviour, as aggressive determination to complete a lesson will bring resolution.

2.6. Motivation

"Let us say that given motivation, it is inevitable that a human being will learn a second language if he is exposed to the language data" (Corder 164). Despite the slipperiness of this concept, it is recognised that motivation, whether instrumental or integrative (Gardner and Lambert, *Attitude and Motivation*) or whether global, situational or task-oriented (Brown, *Affective factors*) or whether part of the act of communication itself (Mac Namara, *Nurseries*), is a determining factor in second language development. It is argued that the explicit knowledge derived from consciousness-raising may not be automatised unless the learner is disposed to spend the energy and extra time that is required to affect this transfer. Fossilisation occurs when the learner is not so disposed. Thus the overall effectiveness of formal instruction may depend not only on the learner's preparedness to invest effort in
consciousness rising but also in his preparedness to practise until 'automaticity' is achieved.

The studies of Kelly (*Centuries of Language Teaching*) and Savignon (*Communicative Competence*) failed to reveal any significant correlation between motivation and achievement or between attitude and achievement but the studies of Spolsky (*Linguistic and language pedagogy*), Gardner and Lambert (*Attitude and Motivation*) found a positive correlation between motivation and second language learning. Motivation is commonly thought of as an inner drive, impulse, emotion or desire that moves one to a particular action. Humans universally have needs or drives that are innate, yet their intensity is environmentally conditioned. Six desires or needs of human organisms have been identified by Ausubel (368-379), which under gird the construct of motivation. These needs appear to capture the essence of the general categories of needs and are especially relevant to second language learning. (1) The need for Exploration, for seeing 'the other side of the mountain', for probing the unknown (2) The need for Manipulation, for operating on the environment and causing change (3) The need for Activity, for movement and exercise, both physical and mental (4) The need for Stimulation, the need to be stimulated by the environment, by other people or by ideas, thoughts and feelings (5) The need for Knowledge, the need to process and internalise the results of exploration, manipulation, activity and stimulation, to resolve contradictions, to quest for solutions to problems and for
self-consistent systems of knowledge. (6) Finally, the need for ego-enhancement, for the self to be known and to be accepted and approved of by others.

Motivation, as the fulfilment of needs, is closely connected to behaviouristic reinforcement theory. Certain needs when satisfactorily met cause reinforcement. Learning a new language enhances one's ego and the ego-enhancement is in itself an internal reinforcer of the desired behaviour.

Motivation is an inner drive or stimulus, which, like self-esteem, can be global, situational or task-oriented. Learning a new language requires some of all three levels of motivation. A learner may possess high 'global' motivation but low 'task' motivation to perform well in a particular aspect of the language.

Gardner and Lambert (Attitude and Motivation) have conducted extensive studies of motivation in second language learning. Two different types of motivation have been identified—instrumental and integrative motivation. Instrumental motivation refers to the learning of a language as a means of attaining instrumental goals such as furthering a career, reading technical, material and translations etc. An integrative motive is employed when a learner wishes to integrate himself with in the culture of the second language group, to identify him with and become part of the society. A learner with instrumental motivation will be interested in learning the second language up to the point where his specific instrumental goals are satisfied. For instance, during travel the
learner can manage to achieve his goals with a very low level of proficiency in the second language. Many of Lambert's studies (Attitude and Motivation) and of Spolsky's (Linguistic and Language pedagogy) concluded that integrative motivation is an important requirement for successful language learning.

According to Schumann:

The motivational orientation associated with proficiency in the second language seems to vary according to the setting. An integrative motivation appears to be more effective in settings where it is neither necessary nor an accepted fact of life that the second language is acquired. Such conditions obtain in the United States with regard to learning languages such as French, German or Italian. On the other hand, in settings such as Iran and Saudi Arabia, learners may have very little integrative motivation to acquire English, but they may have a great deal of instrumental motivation to learn the language in order to be able to deal with English-speaking technical advisors, educators and businessmen.

(Acculturation Model 168)

Gardner (Social Psychology 54) gives a schematic representation of the concept of motivation as it relates to second language acquisition Fig.3.
Attitude towards learning French

Motivational intensity

Goal: Learning French is important to me because...

Desire

Fig. 3

The four elements, viz., attitudes toward learning the language, desire, motivational intensity and goal are illustrated here. Goal here refers to the ultimate objective of the language study, the reason for learning the language and is shown to be assessed in terms of completion of the statement ‘Learning French is important to me because [ . . . ]’ Gardner refers to the categories of reasons as ‘orientations’.

This representation differentiates between orientation and motivation. Orientation is the various reasons for learning a second language. Motivation refers to a complex of three characteristics, which may or may not be related to a particular orientation. These characteristics are attitudes towards learning the language, desire to learn the language, and motivational intensity.

In the Indian scenario, learning English has become an accepted fact of life, a lingua franca in the country, though there is a variation in degree of its acceptability in different parts. The instrumental/integrative construct helps us to grasp the process of learning a second language, but there is no single best means of
learning a second language and the two types of motivation are not mutually exclusive. The student's interest in a second language and their motives for second language learning in different settings has to be studied. It has to be examined how to motivate students in a situation where social motivation is conspicuously absent. To some, motivation is a goal-directed behaviour. Without a clear perception of the long-term goal, the learner may not be well motivated to continue the complex task of second language learning. If one is motivated to read and to write without fluency in speech or accuracy in listening, then one's language learning is far from being complete.

2.6.1. Psychological views of Motivation

2.6.1.1. Drive

The study of motivation was long dominated by the concept of drive. For psychologists like Hull and Thorndike (Weiner, *Theories of Motivation*) this was energy directed towards a given goal. Drive is directly related to need. Man is driven to learn because learning gives him rewards such as approval and tokens of success, which are associated with his need. But the drive theory does not hold good in connection with human learning. The drive to act is reduced if the need is reduced; therefore giving rewards reduce learning instead of increasing it. Human learners often have well defined aims and objectives and the learning part of a language may increase motivational strength and the learner may want to learn the rest.
2.6.1.2. Need for Achievement

The learner's estimate of the value of the task to him and the chances of succeeding are vital components of motivation. The strength of the need for achievement is the result of two tendencies, motivation towards success and motivation towards the avoidance of failure.

2.7. Attitude

Attitude refers to the psychological process that determines an individual's behaviour. Allport (The historical background) defines attitude as "a mental and neural state of readiness organized through experience exerting a directive or dynamic influence upon the individual's response to all objects or situations with which it is associated" (10). The role of attitude in second language learning is no exception to it as the positive attitude of a learner provides imperatives for an individual's response to all objects or situations, which are associated with the process of second language learning. The terms 'attitude' and 'motivation' are interchangeable as is evident in the coinage of terms like attitudinal motivation or motivational attitude.

Attitudes, like all other aspects of the development of cognition and affect in human beings, develop early in childhood and are the result of parental and peer attitudes, contact with people who are 'different' and interacting affective factors in the human experience. Such attitudes form a part of one's perception of self, of others and of the culture in which one is living.
Gardner and Lambert's (Attitude and Motivation) extensive studies reveal that the most important aspect of attitude is group-specific, the attitude that the learner has towards the members of the cultural group whose language he is learning.

John Oller and his colleagues (Oller and Perkins, Intelligence; Chihara and Oller, Attitudes and Attained Proficiency in EFL; Oller, Baca and Vigil, Attitudes and Attained Proficiency in ESL) conducted studies on the relationship between attitudes and language success. In the 1977 study by Oller (Attitudes and Attained Proficiency in ESL) which was aimed at studying the relevance of the attitude of native speakers of Chinese in the United States to their proficiency in English as a second language it was found that there was a negative correlation between their desire to stay in the United States and attainment of proficiency in ESL. The Chinese students did not like to stay in the U.S., yet they performed well in ESL. A second language learner benefits from positive attitudes whereas negative attitudes decrease his motivation leading to unsuccessful attainment of proficiency. Every learner has both positive and negative attitudes and the negative attitudes can be changed by exposure to reality and encounters with actual persons from other cultures. Negative attitudes emerge from undue ethnocentrism that can be dispelled through realistic understanding of the other culture. In his discussion on attitudinal aspects of second language learning, Spolsky (Linguistic and Language pedagogy) comments "in a typical language learning situation there
are a number of people whose attitudes to each other can be insignificant; the learner, the teacher, the learner's peers and parents, and the speakers of the language" (273).

Attitudes toward learning a second language have been found to relate to other factors, for instance, sex differences have been obtained on attitudes toward learning the second language. Girls tend to demonstrate significantly more positive attitudes than boys (Burstall, *Factors Affecting*; Gardner and Smythe, *Second Language acquisition*; Jones, *Attitudes: a preliminary investigation*; *Attitudes, a further investigation*). Attitudes toward learning a second language have been found to be independent of intelligence and language aptitude.

Interaction with the target language community produces positive attitudes towards the language. Contact between the learner groups and native speakers of the language through excursion programme are found to foster positive attitudinal effects (Cziko and Lambert 14-29). The notion that "nothing succeeds like success" (Burstall 17) suggests that students who achieve a high level of proficiency in the second language experience rewards and consequently develop favourable attitudes.

He confirms that attitude is not necessarily something very stable but varies depending upon the achievement levels at various stages of the language course.

[...] that the acquisition of foreign language skills and the development of attitudes towards foreign
language learning during the later years may be powerfully influenced by the learner's initial and formative experience of success or failure in the language learning situation. (17)

Psychologists agree that new attitudes can be formed in the learner and here the language teacher can play a pivotal role. Negative attitudes formed by false stereotyping and undue ethnocentrism can be changed by exposure to reality. A learner, who is well informed about the speaker's of target language, is apparently less inclined to build negative attitudes. Attitudes do not have a one-way channel from the learner to others but there are all possibilities of an interrelationship between the attitudes and success or failure in the second language learning.

2.8.Potential roles of the parent

The role of the learner's peers and parents is of great importance. Carroll has emphasized the importance of parent's involvement in the language activity of the child:

The greater the parents use of the foreign language in the home, the higher were the mean scores of the students. Thus one reason why some students reach high levels of attainment in a foreign language is that they have home environments that are favourable to this, either because the students are better motivated to learn or because they have better
opportunities to learn. *(Foreign Language Proficiency 138)*

Gardner *(Attitudes and Motivation)* distinguished between two potential roles of the parent. The active role, when they encourage the learner to do well, monitors the learner's language learning performance and when they reinforce their success. The passive role, which is subtler, involves the parents' attitudes towards the second language community. Parents with positive attitudes towards the community would serve to support integrative motives and parents with negative attitudes would inhibit the development of positive attitudes even when they actively promote second language achievement. Such parents with negative orientation towards the second language community will encourage their wards, monitor their progress and reinforce their success. At the same time, in other contexts, they express negative opinions about the community, thus developing similar attitudes in their children.

2.9. Aptitude

Language learning requires a specific aptitude or talent for the activity that everybody does not possess, an ear for languages. Aptitude refers to a disposition to be able to do something well.

Carroll *(Learning Theory)* argues that language aptitude comprises four abilities. 'Phonetic coding' is considered the most important and is defined as the ability to both code and assimilate phonetic material and hold it in memory. 'Grammatical sensitivity' is the awareness and appreciation of the functions of grammatical
elements in one's own language. 'Memory ability' is the capacity to remember large amounts of material. 'Inductive language learning ability' involves the general reasoning ability to induce patterns of language from primary data.

There is ample evidence to suggest that there is an association between language aptitude and the degree of proficiency in second language. Language aptitude is important in second language learning because the abilities assessed operate as mediators in the learning process. Carroll (Learning Theory) considers both nature and nurture as contributors to language aptitude though it is difficult to disentangle contributions from the two.

2.10. Socio-Cultural Factors

The human being is a social animal and the chief mechanism for maintaining the bonds of society is language. Each language reflects and interacts with the particular society with which the language is associated. The process of second language learning involves an interaction with a new society and a linguistic and extra-linguistic understanding of that speech community. It demands flexibility and openness to new language norms and norms of social behaviour.

Culture, i.e., the context within which persons exist, think, feel and relate to others, is the collective identity of which each of us is a part. Larson and Smalley described culture as a 'blue print' which guides the behaviour of people in a community and is incubated in family life. It governs our behaviour.
in groups, makes us sensitive to matters of status and helps us to know what others expect of us and what will happen if we do not live up to their expectations. Culture helps us to know how far we can go as individuals and what our responsibility is to the group. Different cultures are the underlying structures that make Round Community round and Square Community square. (39)

Culture establishes for each person a context of cognitive and affective behaviour, but we perceive reality strictly within the context of our culture. "The meaningful universe in which each human being exists is not a universal reality, but a category of reality consisting of selectively organised features considered significant by the society in which he lives" (Condon 17).

Social typing is natural and inevitable to organize life systematically but when these are based on prejudices like racial and cultural superiority, they become ethnic stereotypes. The cross-cultural hurdles in second language learning can be removed by a realistic understanding of the other culture as something that, although different from one’s own, is to be respected and valued. Once students recognize the subjective, socially constructed nature of reality, they will be in a much better position to understand the target language and culture.
2.11. Socio-Economic Factors

Positive attitudes towards learning English language and high scores in tests were consistently associated with high socio-economic status. This can be attributed to the environment to which the students are subjected because the students belonging to higher socio-economic status receive more parental support when they approach new learning experiences than those with parents in lower status. Socio-economic background also determines the type of schools they attend. The students of elite English medium schools acquired English as a second language to a great extent because their school and home environments are more conducive to the process of acquisition. But the students in the rural Malayalam medium schools have lesser or in some cases hardly any environment background helpful to the acquisition of the language. As Street, et al. says,

[. . .] large schools produce higher acquisition because they have more facilities than small schools and attract better prepared teachers and are located in areas of more educational opportunities. (156)

The students belonging to the upper strata of society can afford to go to expensive English medium schools where there are more facilities for learning English and also have a favourable atmosphere at home. The monthly income of parents, their educational qualifications and occupation determine the socio-economic status of the student. According to Morrison and
Mc Intyre, "Most of the influence upon individuals during childhood can be categorized as being associated with home or with socio-economic environment" (14).

2.12. The Social Psychology of Second Language Learning

Schumann (The Acculturation Model 29) argues that the two groups of variables, social factors and affective factors, cluster into a single variable that is the major causal variable in second language learning-acculturation. Acculturation is the social and psychological integration of the learner with the target language group. Any learner can be placed on a continuum that ranges from social and psychological distance to social and psychological proximity with the speaker of the target language, and the learner will acquire the second language only to the degree that he acculturates.

Affective variables relate to language learning by individuals. An individual may learn under social conditions, which are not favourable for second language learning and may not learn under social conditions that appear to be favourable. The psychological variables influencing acculturation and hence second language learning are affective in nature and include language shock, culture shock, ego permeability and ethnocentrism.

2.12.1. Language Shock

Stengel (On learning) points out that learners are apprehensive to speak in a new language for fear of becoming a laughing stock. Further they fear whether their words actually
reflect their ideas. While using a second language in which they are much less proficient, they lose an important source of "narcissistic gratification" which is provided while using their native language (Schumann, *Acculturation Model* 32).

2.12.2. Culture Shock

Culture shock can be defined as anxiety resulting from the disorientations encountered upon entering a new culture. Activities that were routine in his native country require a great deal of energy in the new environment. This situation can cause disorientations, stress, anxiety and fear. The resulting mental state can produce a powerful syndrome of rejection, which diverts energy and attention from the second language learner. The learner is unlikely to make an effort to become bilingual.

2.12.3. Culture Stress

Schumann feels that the extreme symptoms of culture shock may pass relatively quickly, as ways of coping with the new environment are learned, but more subtle problems may persist and produce stress that can last longer (*Acculturation Model* 30). Larson and Smalley (*Becoming Bilingual*) recognise this phenomenon as "Culture Stress" which centres on questions of identity. This prevents second language learning and causes frustration in the learner. They start rejecting the task and "Culture shock and culture stress can induce a whole syndrome of rejections which diverts attention and energy from learning the second language" (Smalley, *Culture Shock* 18).
2.12.4. Ego Permeability

Guiora developed the notion of ‘lango ego’ (qtd. in Schumann, *The Acculturation Model* 35) as parallel to the Freudian construct, body ego. In the course of general ego development, the child acquires a sense of the boundaries of his language—the sounds, words, syntax and morphology of his language become objectified and develop firm outlines and boundaries. In the early developmental stages, language ego boundaries are permeable, but later they become fixed and rigid.

2.12.5. Ethnocentrism

This is the tendency to view one’s own community as superior and other groups as inferior. The authoritarian personality is ethnocentric (Stern 380). Machiavellianism is the individual’s tendency to manipulate others. ‘Anomie’ refers to the loss of an unconscious acceptance of society, as it is, a concept that has been widened to express the feeling of dissatisfaction with one’s role in society. The ‘anomic’ individual, because of his critical attitude to his own society, is open to the demands of a different language and culture; therefore anomie is a positive predictor of language achievement.

2.13. Teacher’s Competence

Principles are abstractions, which have to be actualised as techniques in the particular circumstances of different classrooms. The teaching task is to see that the techniques used are effective in promoting learning objectives. Teaching, then, can be conceived of
as a research activity whereby experimental techniques of instructions are designed, with provision made for adjustments to validate the principle with the utility of the technique. But teachers have extra commitments and cannot just assume the role of the researcher and use students as experimental subjects with detached interest to satisfy an intellectual curiosity. The teachers induce learning and the techniques used work to that end. In effect, teachers become intervening variables in their own experiments, their research applied in the very process of enquiry and directly accountable in terms of practical pay-off (Widdowson 2-3).

The fact that English is taught in India, as in several other parts of the world, by non-native speakers of the language may seem to be a disadvantage, since the teacher's own linguistic competence is limited or deficient in relation to native speaker's competence, and the learner's acquisition will consequently be based on samples of language which are deviant in some respects.

For natural language use, the old, time-honoured authority structure of teacher and student relations has to be broken down and a relationship of acceptance and equality established for which the teachers must be prepared. Natural language use will come only when barriers are broken down, barriers such as pride in status and superior knowledge on one side and defensive attempts to please and hide one's weaknesses and one's real feelings on the other.
2.13.1. Teaching Aids

The teaching aids used in most colleges in Kerala are the same-blackboard, chalk, paper and pencil. The use of projectors might facilitate the learning process but are not provided. The classrooms are admittedly austere in nature but it is misleading to think of the quality of language pedagogy as being independent of either the range of the teaching aids used or the technological sophistication of those aids. The essential condition for language learning is effort at meaningful exchange between language knower and language learners.

2.14. Suggestopedia

Suggestopedia is one of a number of recent educational movements that promise great results if we use the human brainpower within us. According to the Bulgarian psychologist Georgi Lozanov (qtd. in Krashan, Principles and Practice 158-60) that people are capable of learning much more than they give themselves credit for. Drawing on insights from Soviet psychological research on extra sensory perception and from Yoga, Lozanov created a method for learning that capitalizes on relaxed states of mind for maximum retention of material. Music is central to his method. Students sit in soft, comfortable seats in relaxed states of consciousness and are encouraged to be as childlike as possible, yielding all authority to the teacher.

In applications of Suggestopedia to foreign language learning, Lozanov and his followers experimented with the presentation of
vocabulary, readings, dialogue, role-plays, drama and a variety of other typical classroom activities. At the beginning of the session, all conversation stops for a minute or two and the teacher listens to the music coming from tape-recorder. He waits and listens to several passages in order to enter into the mood of the music and then begins to read and recite the new text, his voice modulated in harmony with the musical phrases. The students follow the text in their textbooks where each lesson is translated into the mother tongue. Between each session music is played and at the end, the students silently leave the room. They are not given any homework but asked to read the lesson cursorily before going to bed and also in the morning. Lozanov reported astounding results with suggestopedia but the practicality of using the method is an issue the teachers will have to face.

2.15. Age

Another variable often invoked is age. Lenneberg (Biological Foundations) proposed a neurolinguistic explanation to the age variable. As a result of lateralisation, language-learning functions become specialised in the left hemisphere in most learners that affects the operation of the 'Language Acquisition Device.' Thus, after about the age of twelve, the learners resort to alternative strategies in language learning. This neurolinguistic explanation has been challenged and now the general agreement is that adults are neurolinguistically capable of learning a second language in much the same way as children (Ellis 141).
Children’s eventual superiority in second language learning can be attributed to the affective factors. According to the Critical Period Hypothesis, the affective filter increases in strength at around puberty and this prevents successful processing of input. Children have comparatively low filter that facilitates the proper infiltration of data leading to speedy acquisition of language.

2.16. Exposure

Second language learning scenario is undergoing transitional changes in viewpoints about the process of learning.

The views held by linguists and psycholinguists about language learning have shifted radically during the last ten years. Language learning is now seen as involving the development of a rule-governed, but creative process whereby the learner comes to formulate and modify a series of hypotheses about the rules governing the language to which he is exposed. (Hamayan, et al. 25)

The shift in theoretical views concerning developmental psycholinguistics has led to better understanding of the process of language learning. It has acknowledged that there are similarities between second language learning and first language acquisition. The strategies involved in second language learning may be essentially the same as those that characterise the acquisition of the mother tongue. This focuses the attention of the researches on the exposure to the language the learner receives in the environment. The more the learner is exposed to the language, the more he is
expected to learn it successfully. As in the case of first language acquisition, the second language learner also needs to be involved in conversation in meaningful situations.

The learner needs opportunities to receive the desired level of exposure that might activate the learning process. For instance,

- Use of English by parents, frequency of using the language at home among the family members, etc.
- Use of English by peers-opportunity to hear and use the language with his friends who are proficient in the language.

The learner gets further exposure through the media, listening to radio programmes, television programmes, watching movies, reading books, newspaper and journals and through the practical utilisation of the language in the form of filling applications and writing letters.

Exposure interacts with the social status of the learners and the learner who is socially and economically well placed gets further occasions for effective transactions in the language.

Krashen substantiates his Input Hypothesis with the effect of exposure to a second language learner-"humans acquire language in only one way-by understanding messages or by receiving 'comprehensible input'" (The Input Hypothesis 2). Krashen here asserts that it is not mere exposure that is effective but exposure to the right kind of input. The various sources of exposure a second language learner receives in a normal learning environment are represented in Fig.4.
Exposure to English

in the class room

outside the classroom

teachers peers textbooks

home

outside home

parents siblings media extra

social social

reading visits functions

films

Affective variables assume a significant role in language learning because language learning is an emotional activity involving the individual learner. The emotional status of the learner controls or enhances the learning procedure. Though some of these variables are considered to be innate and stable, studies reveal that successful language learning can materialize if the multifarious predispositions of the learner are diverted to a positive and potential learning programme.