INTRODUCTION

This chapter and chapter 7 deals with two aspects of the affective domain of SLA:

1. The intrinsic side of affectivity: personality factors within a person that contribute in some way to the success of language learning. (Chapter 6)

2. The extrinsic side of affectivity: sociocultural variables that emerge as the second language learner brings not just two languages into contact but two cultures. (Chapter 7)

If we were to devise theories of second language acquisition or teaching methodologies that were based only on cognitive considerations, we would be omitting the most fundamental side of human behavior.

According to Arnold (1999):

- There is no doubt at all about the importance of examining personality factors in building a theory of SLA.

A careful, systematic study of the role of personality in second language acquisition has led to great understandings of the language learning process and to improved language teaching designs.

The Affective Domain

Affect refers to emotion or feeling.

The affective domain is the emotional side of human behavior, and it may be juxtaposed to the cognitive side.

The development of affective states or feelings involves a variety of personality factors, feelings both about ourselves and about others with whom we come into contact.
Benjamin Bloom and his colleagues provided a useful extended definition of the affective domain that is still widely used today.

1. At the first and fundamental level, the development of affectivity begins with receiving. Persons must be aware of the environment surrounding them and be conscious of situations, phenomena, people, objects; be willing to receive—to tolerate a stimulus, not avoid it—and give a stimulus their controlled or selected attention.

2. Next, persons must go beyond receiving to responding, committing themselves in at least some small measure to a phenomenon or a person. Such responding in one dimension may be in acquiescence, but in another, higher, dimension the person is willing to respond voluntarily without coercion, and then to receive satisfaction from that response.

3. The third level of affectivity involves valuing: placing worth on a thing, a behavior, or a person. Valuing takes on the characteristics of beliefs or attitudes as values are internalized. Individuals do not merely accept a value to the point of being willing to be identified with it, but commit themselves to the value to pursue it, seek it out, and want it, finally, to the point of conviction.

4. The fourth level of the affective domain is the organization of values into a system of beliefs, determining interrelationships among them, and establishing a hierarchy of values within the system.

5. Finally, individuals become characterized by and understand themselves in terms of their value system. Individuals act consistently in accordance with the values they have internalized and integrate beliefs, ideas, and attitudes into a total philosophy or world view. It is at this level that problem solving, for example, is approached on the basis of a total, self-consistent system.

Second language learners need to be:

- receptive to those with whom they are communicating and the language itself
- responsive to persons and the context of communication
- willing and able to place a certain value on the communicative act of interpersonal exchange

Understanding how human beings feel, respond, believe, and value is an exceedingly important aspect of a theory of SLA.
SELF-ESTEEM

Self-esteem is probably the most common aspect of any human behavior.

It could easily be claimed that no successful cognitive or affective activity can be carried out without some degree of self-esteem, self-confidence, knowledge of yourself, and belief in your own capabilities for that activity.

Malinowski (1923) noted that all human beings have a need for *phatic communion*; defining oneself and finding acceptance in expressing that self in relation to valued others.

The following is a well-accepted definition of self-esteem (Coopersmith, 1967, cited in Brown, 2000): “In short, self-esteem is a personal judgment of worthiness that is expressed in the attitudes that individuals hold towards themselves.”

People derive their sense of self-esteem from:

- the accumulation of experiences with themselves and with others
- assessments of the external world around them.

Three general levels of self-esteem have been described in the literature to capture its multidimensionality:

1. **General, or Global Self-Esteem**
   - Is relatively stable in a mature adult, and is resistant to change except by active and extended therapy.
   - It is the general assessment one makes of one's own worth over time and across a number of situations.

2. **Situational or Specific Self-Esteem**
   - Refers to one’s self-appraisals in particular life situations
   - The degree of specific self-esteem a person has may vary depending upon the situation or the trait in question.

3. **Task Self-Esteem**
   - It relates to particular tasks within specific situations
For example, it might refer to one's self-evaluation of a particular aspect of the 2nd language acquisition process: speaking, writing, a particular class in a second language.

**STUDIES ON SELF-ESTEEM**

Brodkey and Shore (1976), and Gardner and Lambert (1972)

They included measures of self-esteem in their studies of success in language learning.

The results revealed that self-esteem appears to be an important variable in SLA, particularly in view of cross-cultural factors of second language learning.

MacIntyre, Dörnyei, Clement, & Noels (1998)

They saw the significance of self-confidence in their model of "willingness to communicate" in a foreign language.

- A number of factors appear to contribute to predisposing one learner to seek, and another learner to avoid, second language communication.

- They noted that a high level of communicative ability does not necessarily correspond with a high willingness to communicate.

- MacIntyre et al. (1998) proposed a number of cognitive and affective factors that cause the latter: motivation, personality, intergroup climate, and two levels of self-confidence.
  - The first level resembles what has already been described as situational self-esteem, or “state communicative self-confidence”
  - The second, an overall global level simply labeled “L2 self-confidence”.

- Both self-confidence factors assume important roles in determining one's willingness to communicate.

So, does high self-esteem cause language success, or does language success cause high self-esteem?

- Clearly, both are interacting factors.

- It is difficult to say whether teachers should try to "improve" global self-esteem or simply improve a learner's proficiency and let self-esteem take care of itself.
Heyde’s Self-Esteem Study (1979)

- found that certain sections of a beginning college French course had better oral production and self-esteem scores than other sections after only eight weeks of instruction.
- This finding suggests that teachers really can have a positive and influential effect on both the linguistic performance and the emotional well-being of the student.
- Perhaps these teachers succeeded because they gave optimal attention both to linguistic goals and to the personhood of their students.

INHIBITION

What is inhibition?

- All human beings, in their understanding of themselves, build sets of defenses to protect the ego.
- The human ego encompasses what is referred to as language ego or the very personal, egoistic nature of second language acquisition.
- Meaningful language acquisition involves some degree of identity conflict as language learners take on a new identity with their newly acquired competence.
- An adaptive language ego enables learners to lower the inhibitions that may impede success.
- Many findings from inhibition studies have given rise to a number of steps that have been taken in practices to create techniques that reduce inhibition in the foreign language classroom.
- Language teaching approaches in the last three decades have been characterized by the creation of contexts in which students are made to feel free to take risks and to orally try out hypotheses.

What did this do? It broke down some of the barriers that often make learners reluctant to try out their new language.

- Anyone who has learned a foreign language is aware that second language learning actually necessitates the making of mistakes.
- We test out hypotheses about language by trial and many errors.
- Children learning their first language and adults learning a second can really make progress only by learning from their mistakes.

- If we never ventured to speak a sentence until we were absolutely certain of its total correctness, we would likely never communicate productively at all.

**Mistakes can be viewed as threats to one's ego!**

Why? Because they pose both internal and external threats.

- Internally: one's critical self and one's performing self can be in conflict: the learner performs something "wrong" and becomes critical of his or her own mistake.

- Externally: learners perceive others to be critical.

**RISK-TAKING**

Risk-Taking or what is otherwise known as “the ability to make intelligent guesses”.

Impulsivity is a style that could have positive effects on language success.

Learners have to be able to gamble a bit, to be willing to try out hunches about the language and take the risk of being wrong.

Beebe (1983) described some of the negative ramifications that foster fear of risk-taking:

- **In the classroom:** a bad grade in the course, a fail on the exam, a reproach from the teacher, a smirk from a classmate, punishment or embarrassment imposed by oneself.

- **Outside the classroom:** fear of looking ridiculous, fear of the frustration coming from a listener's blank look, fear of the alienation of not being able to communicate and thereby get close to other human beings & fear of losing their identity.

**How can we resolve this problem?**

- According to Dufeu (1994), teachers need to establish an adequate affective framework so that learners "feel comfortable" as they take their first public steps in the strange world of a foreign language.

**To achieve this teachers have to create a climate of acceptance that will:**

- stimulate self-confidence

- encourage participants to experiment and to discover the target language
We may be tempted to assume that high risk-taking will yield positive results in second language learning; however, such is not usually the case.

A number of studies have found that successful language learners make willing and accurate guesses. So, impulsivity is not always a good thing.

Risk-taking variation seems to be a factor in a number of issues in second language acquisition and pedagogy:

- The silent student in the classroom is one who is unwilling to appear foolish when mistakes are made.

- Self-esteem seems to be closely connected to a risk-taking factor: when those foolish mistakes are made, a person with high global self-esteem is not daunted by the possible consequences of being laughed at.

The implications for teaching:

- The overly high risk-takers, who enjoy dominating the classroom with wild gambles, may need to be "tamed" a bit by the teacher.

- Encouraging students to guess somewhat more willingly than the usual student is prone to do, and to value them as persons for those risks that they take.

ANXIETY

- Anxiety is a factor that is intertwined with self-esteem and inhibition and risk-taking.

- It plays an important affective role in second language acquisition.

- Even though we all know what anxiety is and we all have experienced feelings of anxiousness, anxiety is still not easy to define in a simple sentence.

- It is associated with feelings of uneasiness, frustration, self-doubt, apprehension, or worry.

The research on anxiety suggests that anxiety can be experienced at various levels:

- **Trait Anxiety** is a permanent predisposition to be anxious.

- **State Anxiety** is experienced in relation to some particular event or act.

Trait anxiety, because of its global and somewhat ambiguously defined nature, has not proved to be useful in predicting second language achievement (Maclntyre & Gardner
However, recent research on language anxiety, as it has come to be known, focuses more specifically on the situational nature of state anxiety.

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Three components of foreign language anxiety have been identified:

1. communication apprehension, arising from learners' inability to adequately express mature thoughts and ideas;
2. fear of negative social evaluation, arising from a learner's need to make a positive social impression on others;
3. test anxiety, or apprehension over academic evaluation.

A decade of research has now given us useful information on foreign language anxiety.

Most of these studies conclude that foreign language anxiety can be distinguished from other types of anxiety and that it can have a negative effect on the language learning process.

Two types of anxiety:

- Debilitative Anxiety (harmful anxiety)
- Facilitative Anxiety (helpful anxiety)

Facilitative Anxiety (helpful anxiety)

- The notion of facilitative anxiety is that some concern—some apprehension—over a task to be accomplished is a positive factor.
- It can keep one poised, alert, and just slightly unbalanced to the point that one cannot relax entirely (a symptom of just enough tension to get the job done).

Several studies have suggested the benefit of facilitative anxiety in learning foreign languages:

- In Bailey's (1983) study of competitiveness and anxiety in second language learning, facilitative anxiety was one of the keys to success, closely related to competitiveness.
- Bailey found in her self-analysis that while competitiveness sometimes hindered her progress, at other times it motivated her to study harder.
The implications for teaching:

- Language teachers should assess what kind of anxiety their language students are facing.
- It could well be that a little nervous tension in the process is a good thing.

Too much or too little anxiety may hinder the process of successful second language learning.