



**Non-linguistic Influences on**  
**Second Language Acquisition and Use**

Introduction to SLA  
Class 5

## Non-linguistic Influences

- Attitude and Beliefs
- Aptitude
- Learning styles and strategies
- Motivation
- Age

**Can also be considered *Individual Differences (IDs)***

## Non-linguistic Influences CONT.

- TASK: Discuss how these variables apply differently to *acquisition*, and to *use*

# Attitude and Beliefs

- Social and Psychological distance from TL speakers
- -Schumann's (1978) "Acculturation Model"
- -"the process of becoming adapted to a new culture"
- -acculturation is the prime factor in determining degree of L2A success
- -factors affecting social and psychological distance:

# Social Distance

- *-Social dominance*
- *-Integration pattern*
- *-Enclosure*
- *-Cohesiveness*
- *-Size*
- *-Cultural congruence*
- *-Attitude*
- *-Intended length of residence*

# Psychological Distance

- *-Language Shock*
- *-Culture Shock*
- *-Motivation*
- *-Ego permeability*

*TASK: Can you identify examples of the various elements of Schumann's model?*

# Aptitude

- -separate from motivation
- -stable
- -predictive of *rate* of acquisition, rather than final outcome
- -different from intelligence(?)

# How to measure aptitude?

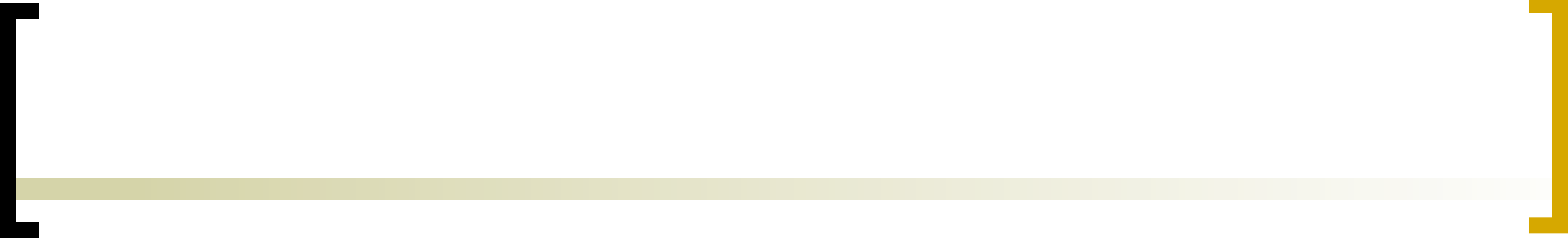
The aim is twofold...

- 1. to predict learning outcomes
- 2. to identify individual learning strengths



# -various tests:

- 1. Modern Language Aptitude Test (MLAT) Carroll (1965)
- -targets four interrelated areas:
  - -Phonemic coding
  - -Grammatical sensitivity
  - -Inductive language learning
  - -Memory

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- A large black left bracket and a large yellow right bracket are positioned at the top of the slide, with a horizontal line in between. The line is light green on the left and yellow on the right.
- 2. Defense Aptitude Language Battery
    - -Tests general ability to follow syntactic rules
    - -Uses an invented language
    - -Scores recorded as levels (1, 2, 3, etc.)
    - Higher score indicates ability to successfully study more difficult languages (Arabic, Chinese, Korean, etc.)

Test your aptitude! Google “Linguistics Challenge” for <http://webscript.princeton.edu/~ahesterb/puzzles.php>

# The Aptitude Complex Hypothesis (ACH)

-a dynamic view of language aptitude

-second/foreign language learning in one situation can be specified and are not necessarily identical to those required in another situation

-teachers need to identify individual learners' strengths and weaknesses in relation to learning conditions

**TASK:** Do you agree with this general definition of aptitude? Think of anecdotal evidence to support your view.

# Learning style

- -how individuals orient themselves to problem-solving situations.
- -From psychology studies:
- -“serialists”, with a simple hypothesis vs.
- -“wholists”, with a complex hypothesis

# Learning style cont.

- For SLA studies:
- -Field independent vs. dependent distinction (FI/FD):
  - -referents
  - -cognitive restructuring skills
  - -interpersonal competencies

# FD/FI (continued)

FD:

- reliance on external referents
- tend to use interpersonal competencies
- more averse to risk
- tend to hypothesize serially

FI:

- less reliant on approval
- willing to take risks
- tend to hypothesize holistically

# Other learning styles:

- -visual
- -auditory
- -kinesthetic
- -tactile
- -concrete
- -analytical
- -communicative
- -authority-oriented

# TASK:

- a. Do you think learning styles are fixed regardless of the learning situation? Or do they vary, dependent on the situation?
- b. We've noted some problems in determining learners' preferred learning styles. What steps might researchers take to reduce the effect of these problems, or to eliminate them altogether?



# Learning Strategies

- -a strategy may be thought of as “a mental or behavioral activity related to some specific stage in the overall process of language acquisition or language use.” (Ellis, 1994)
- -the mechanisms that establish the relationship between individual learner differences and the *outcome* of the SLA process

# -Ellis identifies three types of strategies:

- 1. *production strategies*
  - -simplification
  - -rehearsal
  - -discourse planning
- 2. *communication strategies*
  - -asking for clarification
  - -avoidance
  - -introducing new conversation topics-re-using interlocutors' words/grammar
- 3. *learning strategies*
  - -using written feedback
  - -attending to error correction

O'Malley and Chamot (1987) proposed a three-tiered framework of learner strategies:

- 1. *Cognitive*: steps used to problem-solve that require direct analysis or transformation:
  - -repetition
  - -note-taking
  - -elaboration
  - -recombination

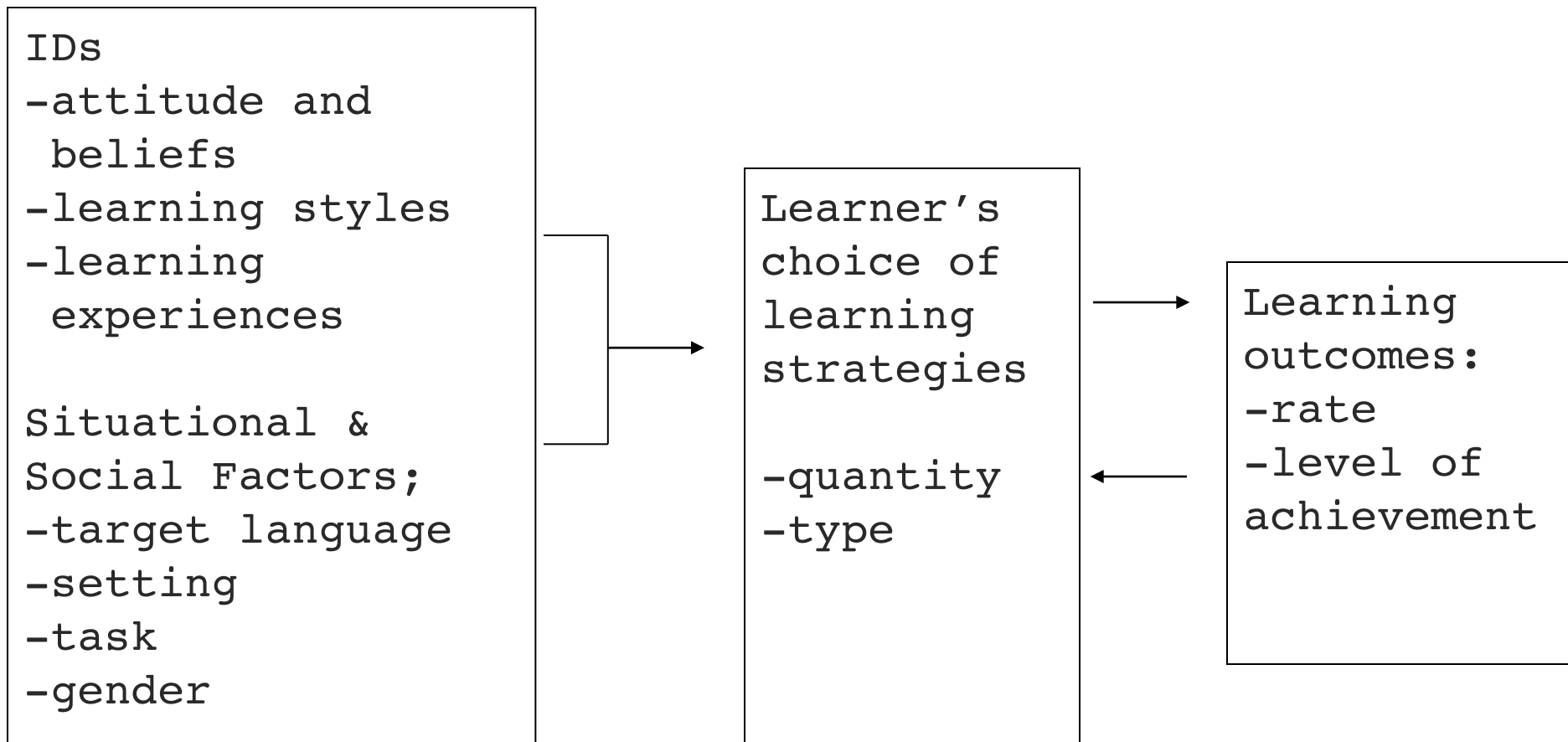
# Continued

- 2. *Metacognitive*: make use of knowledge about cognitive processes; attempt to regulate language learning by planning, monitoring and evaluating:
  - -planning
  - -directed attention
  - -self-monitoring

# Continued

- 3. *Social/affective*: ways in which the learner chooses to interact with and other learners and TL speakers:
  - -cooperation
  - -questioning for clarification, paraphrase, etc.

# Relationship between individual learner differences, situational factors, learning strategies, and learning outcomes (Ellis, 1994)



# Motivation

- -Integrative motivation
  - -assimilation into a culture
  - Gardner and MacIntyre (1991)
- -Instrumental motivation- desire to profit from knowledge of TL
  - -desire to control/manipulate TL group
  - Chihara and Oller (1978)
- -Intrinsic motivation
  - -desire to learn TL for the sake of learning
  - -Extrinsic motivation
    - -External pressure/threat imposed with the intention of forcing learner to acquire language
      - -"Bullet" method

[ -How to measure? Not easy... ]

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- -self-report questionnaires
- -Gardner's (1985) "Attitude and Motivation Index" (AMI)
- -attitude toward TL, the teacher, TL speakers



# -Predictive?

- -Difficult to operationalize
- TASK: In your own L2 acquisition experiences, what have been some strong motivating factors? Were they predictive of your learning outcome? Where would you include them in the three categories above?

# Age

- The effects of age on ultimate outcome
  - -Children better than adults
    - -always?
    - -what is better?
- The effects of age on rate of attainment
  - -Adults better than children (to a degree)
  - -Contributing factors
    - -children receive better input
    - -psychological
      - -children less prone to protecting ego
      - -children less anxious about accuracy
    - -linguistic
      - loss of access to/atrophy of UG

# Non-linguistic cognitive factors

- -neurological
  - -loss of placticity
  - -Critical Period Hypothesis
    - -Lenneberg (1967)
      - -Puberty
    - -Scovel (1988)
      - -pre-puberty

# Continued

- -Long (1990)
- -age 6
- -Seliger (1978)
- -Multiple Periods Hypothesis
- -phonology before syntax
- -lexical acquisition last, or
- not affected by a CP

# [ In Conclusion... ]

- Considering the tremendous number of variables at play that can influence the L2 acquisition outcome, we can only marvel at how learners ever achieve meaningful levels of ability in their TL. Two questions to ask:
- What variables have hindered or helped your own L2A process?
- Is it possible to control certain variables in your ESL classroom so as to promote learning? Which variables?