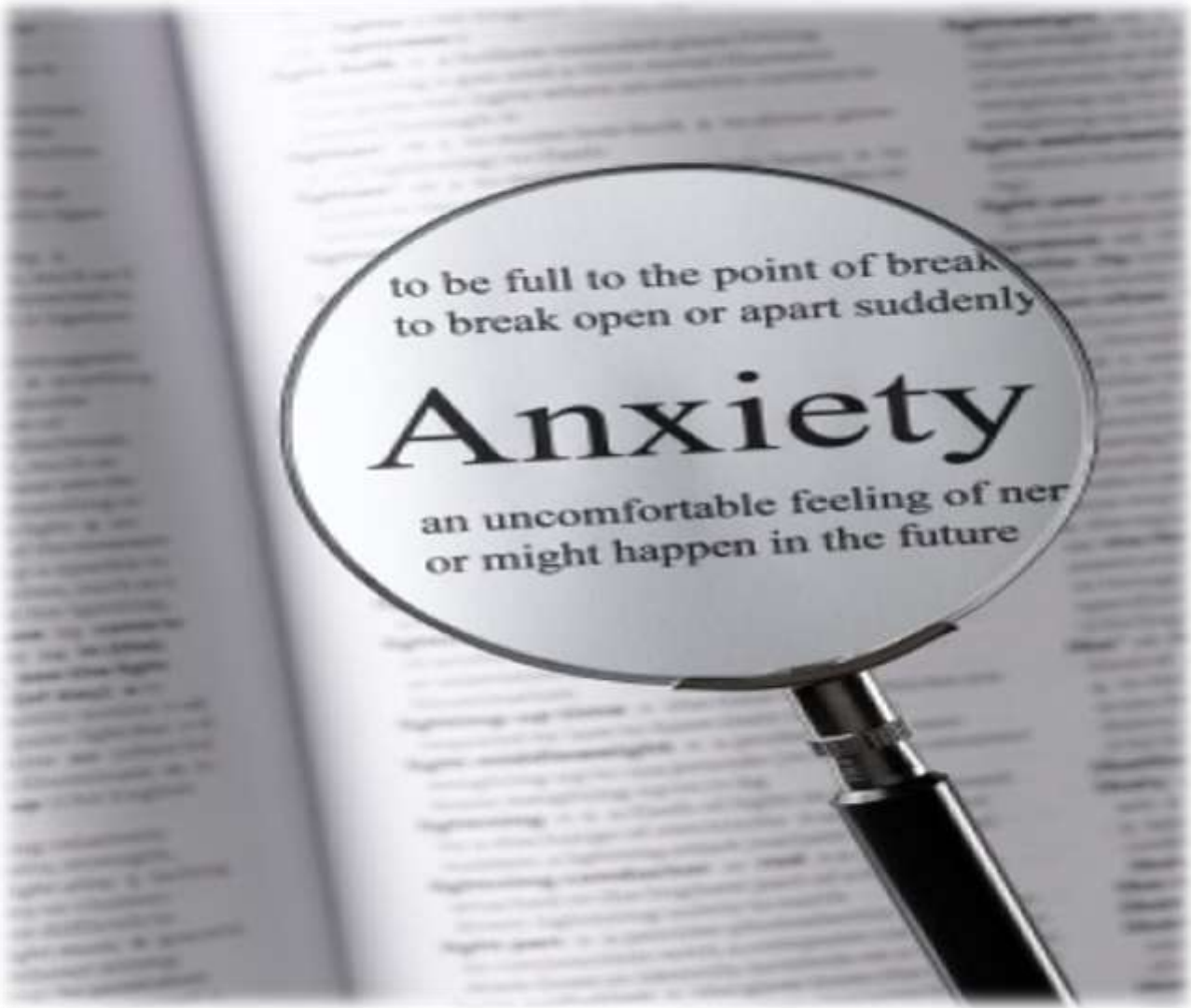




Individual Learner Differences

By: Arezoo Aeli

A magnifying glass is held over an open dictionary. The lens is focused on the entry for the word 'Anxiety'. The text within the lens is sharp, while the surrounding text in the dictionary is blurred. The background of the entire image is a light green color with a faint geometric pattern.

to be full to the point of break
to break open or apart suddenly

Anxiety

an uncomfortable feeling of ner
or might happen in the future

Anxiety

Anxiety is a factor that is closely related with self-esteem and inhibition and risk-taking. Anxiety can play an important role in L2 learning if it interferes with the learning process. Even though it is a common feeling, it is not easy to define. It comes with the feelings of uneasiness, frustration, self-doubt, apprehension, or worry. A learner's willingness to communicate has also been related to anxiety. It is often affected by the number of people present, the topic of conversation, and the formality of the circumstances.

Types of anxiety :

1. **Trait anxiety:** it is a more permanent tendency to be anxious
2. **State anxiety:** it is a type of anxiety experienced in relation to some particular event or act which can be temporary and context-specific

Age



Effects of age on RATE of second language learning

- **Adults are superior to children in rate of acquisition**
- **Older children learn more rapidly than younger children With regards to morphology and syntax, the adolescents do best, followed by the adults and then the children**
- **Grammar differences diminish over time, and children begin to catch up, but adults outperform children in the short term**

- **Where pronunciation is concerned, adults do not always progress more rapidly than children do**
- **adults learn faster than children, and this is more applicable to grammar than pronunciation, although in the case of formal learning situations adults seem to do better even in the pronunciation area. It is not clear when children start to catch up.**

• *Effects of age on the acquisition of native speaker proficiency*

- **Some people say that under the right conditions adults can achieve native-like proficiency in pronunciation.**
- **Other people believe that even very advanced learners lack some of the linguistic abilities of native speakers.**

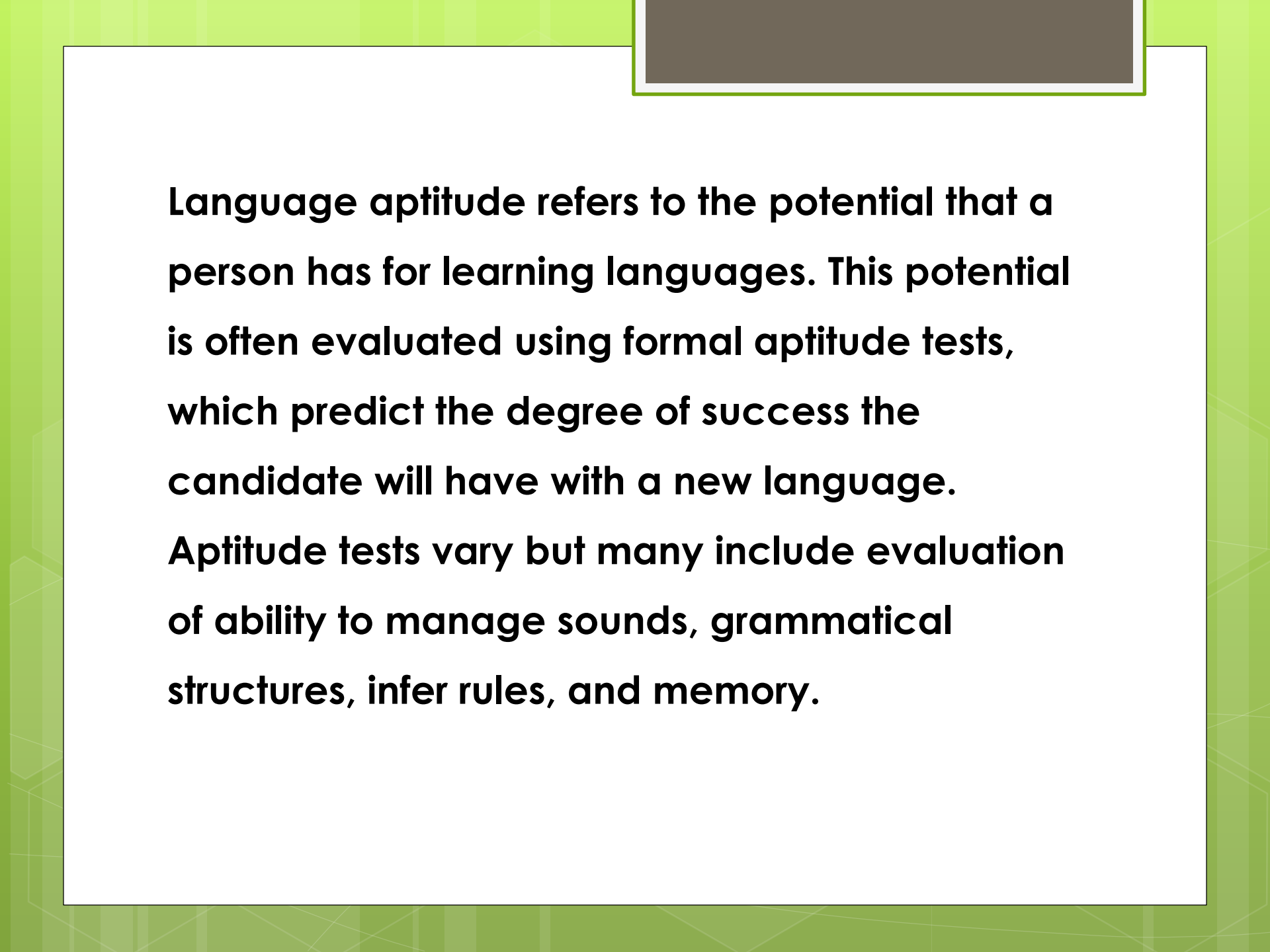
- **it is possible that under ideal circumstances learners who start after puberty can learn to produce speech and writing that cannot easily be distinguished from that of native speakers.**
- **In fact starting early is no guarantee that native-speaker abilities will be achieved, even in the most favorable learning situations.**




- **Effects of age on learners' second language achievement**

- **Age has very little (if any) effect on the process of acquisition. The effect may be a minimal one in the case of grammar –remember Interlanguage developmental stages, but perhaps a little bit more significant in the case of pronunciation.**
- **In naturalistic settings, learners who start as children achieve more native-like accent than those who start as teenagers or adults.**

- **In formal contexts this does not happen, perhaps because the amount of exposure needed for the age advantage of young learners to emerge is not enough.**
- **Even if younger is better in the long run, it does not apply to the acquisition of English literacy skills: older is better, as they benefit from prior literacy experience (learners who already know how to read and write in their first language).**



Language aptitude refers to the potential that a person has for learning languages. This potential is often evaluated using formal aptitude tests, which predict the degree of success the candidate will have with a new language. Aptitude tests vary but many include evaluation of ability to manage sounds, grammatical structures, infer rules, and memory.



Language aptitude may be fixed but there are many things teachers can do in the area of learner training to improve the learner's ability. These include helping learners identify their preferences for learning; thinking about learning styles, and then looking at how these can be developed; and developing learner autonomy by teaching learners how to study effectively.



Intelligence

- **Traditionally, intelligence refers to the mental abilities that are measured by an IQ (intelligence quotient) test. It usually measures only two types of intelligence: verbal/linguistic and mathematical/logical intelligence.**

Learning style

○ **Field-independent learners**

In the field-dependent/independent model of cognitive or learning style, a field-independent learning style is defined by a tendency to separate details from the surrounding context. It can be compared to a field-dependent learning style, which is defined by a relative inability to distinguish detail from other information around it. Theorists define these two cognitive styles in terms of how they are psychologically different - which makes this a useful model for teachers trying to understand their learners.

○ **Field dependence learners**

Field dependence is a concept in the field of cognitive styles. It is a one-dimensional model of variation in cognitive style. The concept was first proposed by Herman Witkin (an American psychologist) in 1962. Field dependence/independence was the earliest studied area in the study of cognitive styles.

In general, people who exhibit field dependence tend to rely on information provided by the outer world, the field or frame of a situation and their cognition (toward other things) is based on this overall field.

Visual, Auditory and Kinesthetic (VAK) learning style model

A common and widely-used model of learning style is Fleming's (2001) Visual Auditory Kinesthetic (VAK) model. According to this model, most people possess a dominant or preferred learning style; however some people have a mixed and evenly balanced blend of the three styles:

1. **Visual learners**
2. **Auditory learners**
3. **Kinaesthetic learners**



Visual learners tend to:



- **Learn through seeing**
- Think in pictures and need to create vivid mental images to retain information
- **Enjoy looking at maps, charts, pictures, videos, and movies**
- Have visual skills which are demonstrated in puzzle building, reading, writing, understanding charts and graphs, a good sense of direction, sketching, painting, creating visual metaphors and analogies (perhaps through the visual arts), manipulating images, constructing, fixing, designing practical objects, and interpreting visual images

Auditory learners tend to:

- **Learn through listening**
- **Have highly developed auditory skills and are generally good at speaking and presenting**
- **Think in words rather than pictures**
- **Learn best through verbal lectures, discussions, talking things through and listening to what others have to say**
- **Have auditory skills demonstrated in listening, speaking, writing, storytelling, explaining, teaching, using humor, understanding the syntax and meaning of words, remembering information, arguing their point of view, and analyzing language usage**



Tactile/ Kin aesthetic learners tend to:



- **Learn through moving, doing and touching**
- Express themselves through movement
- **Have good sense of balance and eye-hand coordination**
- Remember and process information through interacting with the space around them

- Find it hard to sit still for long periods and may become distracted by their need for activity and exploration
- **Have skills demonstrated in physical coordination, athletic ability, hands on experimentation, using body language, crafts, acting, miming, using their hands to create or build, dancing, and expressing emotions through the body.**
- They learn best through a hands-on approach, actively exploring the physical world around them. They may find it hard to sit still for long periods and may become distracted.



Motivation is an act of stimulating the interest of somebody to do something.

In the most general sense, motivation research addresses the basic question of why humans think and behave as they do; that is, motivation concerns the direction and magnitude of human behavior, or, more specifically (i) the choice of a particular action, (ii) the persistence with it, and (iii) the effort expended on it. In broad terms, motivation is responsible for why people decide to do something, how long they are willing to sustain the activity, and how hard they are going to pursue it.



Motivation

Learners with an instrumental motivation want to learn a language because of a practical reason such as getting a salary bonus or getting into college. Many college language learners have a clear instrumental motivation for language learning: They want to fulfill a college language requirement! Integrative motivated learners want to learn the language so that they can better understand and get to know the people who speak that language.

Integrative Motivation



Learners who are integrative motivated want to learn the language because they want to get to know the people who speak that language. They are also interested in the culture associated with that language. Integrative motivated learners may have significant others such as a boyfriend or girlfriend or family members who speak the language, and heritage language learners typically have a particularly strong integrative motivation for language learning.

Hypotheses:

- **The Intrinsic Hypothesis:** motivation derives from an inherent interest in the learning tasks the learner is asked to perform.
- **The Resultative Hypothesis:** learners do well persevere, those who do not well will be discouraged and try less hard.
- **The Internal Cause Hypothesis:** the learner brings to the learning situation a certain quantity of motivation as a given.
- **The Carrot and Stick Hypothesis:** external influences and incentives will affect the strength of the learner's motivation.

Personality refers to individual differences in characteristic patterns of thinking, feeling and behaving. The study of personality focuses on two broad areas: One understands individual differences in particular personality characteristics, such as sociability or irritability.



Extraversion

- Extraversion is "the act, state, or habit of being predominantly concerned with obtaining gratification from what is outside the self". Extraverts tend to enjoy human interactions and to be enthusiastic, talkative, assertive, and gregarious. Extraverts are energized and thrive off of being around other people. They take pleasure in activities that involve large social gatherings, such as parties, community activities, public demonstrations, and business or political groups. They also tend to work well in groups. An extraverted person is likely to enjoy time spent with people and find less reward in time spent alone. They tend to be energized when around other people, and they are more prone to boredom when they are by themselves.

Introversion

Introversion is "the state of or tendency toward being wholly or predominantly concerned with and interested in one's own mental life". Introverts are typically more reserved or reflective. Some popular psychologists have characterized introverts as people whose energy tends to expand through reflection and dwindle during interaction. Introverts often take pleasure in solitary activities such as reading, writing, using computers, hiking and fishing.

Risk-taking

Risk-Taking is “the ability to make intelligent guesses” (Rubin & Thompson, 1994). Beebe (1983) described some of the reasons that create 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.

Ambiguity Tolerance

Intolerance is a psychological construct which describes the relationship that individuals have with ambiguous stimuli or events. Individuals view these stimuli in a neutral and open way or as a threat.



Empathy

Empathy is the capacity to understand what another person is experiencing from within the other person's frame of reference, i.e., the capacity to place oneself in another's shoes.



Self esteem

Many researchers claim that no successful learning activity can take place without some self- esteem and self confidence. Cooper smith (1967) defines self- esteem as a personal judgment of worthiness that is expressed in the attitudes that the individual holds towards himself/herself. Brodkey and Shore (1976) revealed that self-esteem appears to be an important variable in SLA, particularly in view of cross-cultural factors of second language learning.



Inhibition

A feeling that makes one self-conscious and unable to act in a relaxed and natural way.

Inhibition is the set of defenses an individual builds to protect himself/herself. The presence of a language ego is considered to be a major hindrance to the process of second language acquisition. The process of making mistakes, learning from those mistakes and a consequent improvement in the language skills get inhibited by this ego. With an adaptive language ego, the learner lowers the inhibitions. An overtly self-critical nature perceives the mistakes committed during language learning process as an insult and further slows down the process.



sensory modality

Stimulus modality, also called sensory modality, is one aspect of a stimulus or what we perceive after a stimulus. For example the temperature modality is registered after heat or cold stimulate a receptor.

Some sensory modalities include: light, sound, temperature, taste, pressure, smell.



Social preferences

Social preferences are a type of preference studied in behavioral and experimental economics and social psychology, including interpersonal altruism, fairness, reciprocity, and inequity aversion.

Cognitive style

Cognitive style or "thinking style" is a term used in cognitive psychology to describe the way individuals think, perceive and remember information. Cognitive style differs from cognitive ability (or level), the latter being measured by aptitude tests or so-called intelligence tests.



Leveling and sharpening

Leveling and sharpening are two contrasting automatic functions within our memory. Sharpening is the tendency to retroactively add vivid details in the retelling of self experienced- and retold stories. Leveling is our tendency to exclude and tone down parts of stories in memory and to fill in memory gaps.

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