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# Lessons from Good Language Learners

Edited by  
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# Lessons from Good Language Learners

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*Carol Griffiths*



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# Contents

|   |      |
|---|------|
| <b>List of contributors</b>                           | viii |
| <b>Acknowledgements</b>                               | xi   |
| <b>Editor's overview</b>                              | 1    |
| <i>Carol Griffiths</i>                                |      |
| <b>Prologue</b>                                       | 7    |
| <i>Andrew D. Cohen</i>                                |      |
| <b>Reflections</b>                                    | 10   |
| <i>Joan Rubin</i>                                     |      |
| <b>Part I   Learner variables</b>                     |      |
| <b>1.   Motivation and good language learners</b>     | 19   |
| <i>Ema Ushioda</i>                                    |      |
| <b>2.   Age and good language learners</b>            | 35   |
| <i>Carol Griffiths</i>                                |      |
| <b>3.   Learning style and good language learners</b> | 49   |
| <i>Carisma Nel</i>                                    |      |
| <b>4.   Personality and good language learners</b>    | 61   |
| <i>Madeline Ehrman</i>                                |      |
| <b>5.   Gender and good language learners</b>         | 73   |
| <i>Martha Nyikos</i>                                  |      |
| <b>6.   Strategies and good language learners</b>     | 83   |
| <i>Carol Griffiths</i>                                |      |
| <b>7.   Metacognition and good language learners</b>  | 99   |
| <i>Neil J. Anderson</i>                               |      |
| <b>8.   Autonomy and good language learners</b>       | 110  |
| <i>Sara Cotterall</i>                                 |      |
| <b>9.   Beliefs and good language learners</b>        | 121  |
| <i>Cynthia White</i>                                  |      |

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| <b>10. Culture and good language learners</b>                  | 131 |
| <i>Claudia Finkbeiner</i>                                      |     |
| <b>11. Aptitude and good language learners</b>                 | 142 |
| <i>Leila Ranta</i>   |     |
| <b>Part II Learning variables</b>                              |     |
| <b>12. Vocabulary and good language learners</b>               | 159 |
| <i>Jo Moir and Paul Nation</i>                                 |     |
| <b>13. Grammar and good language learners</b>                  | 174 |
| <i>Margaret Bade</i>   |     |
| <b>14. Functions and good language learners</b>                | 185 |
| <i>Zia Tajeddin</i>  |     |
| <b>15. Pronunciation and good language learners</b>            | 197 |
| <i>Adam Brown</i>  |     |
| <b>16. Listening and good language learners</b>                | 208 |
| <i>Goodith White</i>   |     |
| <b>17. Speaking and good language learners</b>                 | 218 |
| <i>Yasushi Kawai</i>   |     |
| <b>18. Reading and good language learners</b>                  | 231 |
| <i>Karen Schramm</i>   |     |
| <b>19. Writing and good language learners</b>                  | 244 |
| <i>Louise Gordon</i>   |     |
| <b>20. Teaching/learning method and good language learners</b> | 255 |
| <i>Carol Griffiths</i>   |     |
| <b>21. Strategy instruction and good language learners</b>     | 266 |
| <i>Anna Uhl Chamot</i>   |     |
| <b>22. Error correction and good language learners</b>         | 282 |
| <i>Michael Roberts and Carol Griffiths</i>                     |     |
| <b>23. Tasks and good language learners</b>                    | 294 |
| <i>Joan Rubin and Patricia McCoy</i>                           |     |
| <b>The learners' landscape and journey: a summary</b>          | 306 |
| <i>Rebecca Oxford and Kyoung Rang Lee</i>                      |     |



To commemorate the publication of Joan Rubin's seminal article in  
*TESOL Quarterly* (1975) and to acknowledge those who have  
contributed to the field since then

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To my father

# Acknowledgements

This book was begun in about March 2005, which was, in fact, the year of the 30th anniversary of the publication of Joan Rubin's (1975) article "What the 'Good Language Learner' can teach us." Naively, I planned to have it finished before the end of the year . . .

When it comes to acknowledgements for this book, it is hard to know where to start. I guess we have to start with a tribute to Joan herself. I did not know Joan when I began this project, but, of course, almost everybody in the field knows her landmark article. When I did finally meet her, in Auckland New Zealand in early 2007, I understood what Andrew Cohen in his Prologue to this volume means by describing her as someone with "an impressive abundance of energy".

And, of course, I am deeply indebted to the numerous contributors to the book. Frankly, keeping track of so many, checking that they are all kept informed, and so on, has at times been, to put it somewhat euphemistically, a challenge. However, the variety of authors, representing many of the "big names" as well as the "new blood" in the field certainly adds to both the depth and the breadth of the volume.

On a personal level, I am also deeply grateful to Rebecca Oxford. My relationship with Rebecca goes back to when I wrote to her asking for permission to use her questionnaire in my own research, permission which she unhesitatingly gave. Another on whose help and advice I have often depended is Andrew Cohen, whom I got to know well during the year he spent with his wife in New Zealand. It is wonderful to know someone like Andrew who is so fast on the reply button! Yet another is Zoltán Dörnyei. Although I was disappointed that Zoltán was not able to contribute to the volume himself, he recommended two people who did contribute, and his encouragement and support have been much appreciated throughout. Rod Ellis, whom I know from Auckland University, was also unable to contribute. But Rod's personal example of unrelenting and focused hard work has been more of an inspiration than he may well realize.

When I started the project in 2005 I was working at Auckland Institute of Studies in New Zealand. Although I have moved on since to gain professional experience in China, I would like to acknowledge with gratitude the support I received from AIS St Helens in Auckland, New

## Acknowledgements

Zealand in the early stages. Also very supportive was my first institution in China, Beijing Ti Yu Da Xue (Beijing Sports University), and, likewise, my current university, Min Zu Da Xue (Central University of Nationalities).

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# Editor's overview

*Carol Griffiths*

## Key questions

In her seminal article Rubin (1975, p. 42), suggested that “if we knew more about what the ‘successful learners’ did, we might be able to teach these strategies to poorer learners to enhance their success record.” Aptitude, motivation, and opportunity, she argued, are essential characteristics of good language learners who either have or can develop these characteristics. Rubin constructed a list of strategies typical of good language learners, who, according to her observations, are willing and able to use clues (for instance non-verbal, word association, and general knowledge) in order to guess meaning; use a variety of techniques (such as circumlocution, paraphrase, or gestures) in order to communicate or learn from communication; manage inhibitions (such as the fear of appearing foolish or of making mistakes); attend to form (for instance by analyzing, categorizing, and synthesizing); practice the language they are trying to learn (for instance by seeking out native speakers and initiating conversations); monitor both their own and others’ speech (for instance by learning from mistakes); and attend to meaning (for instance by interpreting mood and intonation). These strategies, as Rubin pointed out, will vary according to a number of factors including the task, the learning stage, the learner’s age, the learning context, learning style, and cultural differences. Rubin concluded by suggesting that knowledge about good language learners “will lessen the difference between the good learner and the poorer one” (p. 50).

When Rubin published her article on good language learners in 1975, she probably did not expect that she would sow the seeds of a controversy which would still be unresolved more than 30 years later. This volume traces various aspects of the controversy, tries to draw the threads of consensus together, and points to the future for the critical questions:

- What is it that makes for a good language learner?
- Why are some learners more successful than others?
- How do learner characteristics such as motivation, beliefs, aptitude, age, gender, style, personality and culture, and learner behavior such

as strategy use, metacognition, or autonomy relate to effective language learning?

- How can learners manage aspects of the learning situation such as teaching/learning method, strategy instruction, error correction, or task, in order to effectively reach learning goals such as building vocabulary, expanding grammatical knowledge and functional competence, improving pronunciation, and developing their listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills?
- What have we already found out and what do we still need to know?
- What can educators do to help?

Although Rubin focussed mainly on language learning strategies, this book approaches the question of how good language learners learn from a broader perspective. It pursues some of the areas Rubin identified as requiring further research, and includes yet others which she did not mention, at least directly (for instance gender, personality, and autonomy). These variables have also been identified as potentially important contributors to success or otherwise in language learning.

## **Aims of this book**

In the 30 years since Rubin's famous article was published, debate has raged and continues to this day. Failure to reach consensus over even basic definitions has inhibited research initiatives (O'Malley, Chamot, Stewner-Manzanares, Kupper, and Russo, 1985) and contributed to a "theoretical muddle" which is overdue for "clearing away" (Dornyei and Skehan, 2003, p. 610). This book attempts to contribute to this clearing away process by looking at a wide range of variables in relation to good language learners and their learning. However, given the "veritable plethora" (Ellis, 1994, p. 471) of such variables which have been identified, it has not been possible to include them all in this volume; as many as possible of those most commonly researched are represented. Given such breadth, it has not been possible to go into any of the topics in depth. The aim has been to:

- provide a comprehensive overview of learner/learning issues
- review the literature and research to date
- provide a reference base
- address theoretical issues
- consider pedagogical implications
- identify gaps in our current understanding
- suggest useful research initiatives
- consider how all of these relate to successful language learning by unique individuals in a variety of situations.



In other words, this book looks at language learning from research, literature, theoretical, pedagogical, and human perspectives.

## Organisation of the book

The book is divided into two parts:

Part I is about learner variables, which include motivation, aptitude, age, style, personality, gender, culture, beliefs, strategies, metacognition, and autonomy. Although some of these variables may be influenced to a greater or lesser extent by external factors, they are individual characteristics or behaviors which make each learner unique.

Part II is about learning variables, including vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, function, listening, speaking, reading, and writing, the learning of which is influenced by factors in the learning situation such as the teaching/learning method, strategy instruction, error correction practices, or task requirements. These variables have their origin externally, but must be managed by the learners if successful learning is to take place.

In order to provide a variety of perspectives, each part contains both state-of-the-art articles and research-based articles. Within each of these divisions, specialists in their various fields have written on specific topics (such as motivation, strategies, instruction, or vocabulary). Each topic is defined, the literature reviewed, and related issues discussed before implications for the teaching/learning situation and questions for further research are suggested.

The list of variables dealt with in this volume is, of course, not exhaustive. Indeed, as indicated previously, it is almost certainly impossible to include every conceivable variable in any one volume. Furthermore, new research initiatives are adding to the existing body of knowledge all the time. Especially fertile at the moment are the areas of situational variables, identity, volition, the development of pragmatic competence and self-regulation, as well as affective variables including self-efficacy and anxiety. Nevertheless, this book covers a wide range of topics related to how good language learners develop a target language, and aims to provide a basic core of information on the subject areas and to act as a springboard for those who want to pursue a particular topic in greater depth.

## Terminology

The lack of consensus to which O'Malley *et al.* (1985) refer extends beyond definition to the even more basic level of terminology. A review of the literature reveals a bewildering array of terms used in the field of

language development: ESL, EFL, SLA, ESOL, L1, L2, and so on. Sometimes these terms seem to be used to refer to much the same concept, other times their meanings appear to be quite different.

When talking about learners, many writers (for instance Cook, 1991; Ellis, 1994; Larsen-Freeman and Long, 1991; Sharwood Smith, 1994) opt for the terms *second language* or *L2* to describe the students, even though it may be used "somewhat confusingly" (Ellis, 1994, p. 12). The term is confusing because it does not allow for the many students who may already be multilingual and who may be in the process of learning a third, fourth, or subsequent language. There is also frequent confusion between the terms *second language* or *ESL* (to describe a language being studied in the environment where the language is spoken, for instance Somalis studying English in New Zealand), and *foreign language* or *EFL* (to describe a language being studied in an environment other than where it is spoken, for instance French as it is taught in England or New Zealand, or English as it is taught in China). Although some writers use the *ESL/EFL* terms with more or less the same meaning, others regard them as quite distinct from each other. The term *SOL* (speakers of other languages), as favored by publications such as *TESOL Quarterly*, *TESOL Matters* and *TESOLANZ Journal*, has arisen partly to avoid this confusion. However, it is rather long and clumsy. Other terms such as *non-native*, *non-primary*, *non-English-speaking-background* have been used, but the intrinsically negative perspective of these terms makes them less than universally acceptable.

Because of the sometimes uncomfortable distinctions noted above, the question arises of what to call the language being studied. Options such as *additional language* or *additive language* tend to make the language sound either marginalised or like a brand of food or petrol! The increasingly common term *target language* tends to sound a little aggressive and militaristic, but does at least denote the goal at which the student is aiming.

And, of course, the gulf established by Krashen (for instance Krashen, 1981) between acquisition (the development of language in a naturalistic environment) and learning (the development of language by means of conscious study) has never been entirely bridged in a universally acceptable manner. Although the field has moved on considerably in the more than 20 years since Krashen hypothesised a nil interface position regarding the learning-acquisition constructs, and although contemporary writers often use these two terms more or less interchangeably, the dichotomous view regarding the development of language established more than 20 years ago continues to create an area of uncertainty and potential misunderstanding.

Unfortunately, universally acceptable terms in the field of language

development by students who already speak other languages and who are aiming to learn a new language have yet to be coined, or at least agreed upon. For the purposes of the present work, the term *speakers of other languages* (SOL) will be favored, since it at least avoids the confusion between second language and foreign language, it allows for the possibility that the student may speak any number of other languages, and it avoids negative implications. The language a student is aiming at will be termed the *target* or *new* language, and the term *language development* will be used to include both *acquisition* and *learning* unless some clear distinction is being drawn between the two.

## **Who is this book for?**

Although Rubin's 1975 article focused especially on strategies, she suggested that many other variables need to be considered when looking at good language learners. This volume attempts to take Rubin's initiative further by investigating a wide range of variables, any one of which has the potential to affect how students learn, and which, in combination, present an extremely complex picture.

This book is intended for and will be especially useful to:

- those studying for degrees or diplomas in language development; they will find that this volume contains a wealth of information and references which can be used as the basis for completing assignments focusing on learners and how they go about learning language successfully;
- trainee teachers to help prepare them for the realities of life in the classroom;
- practicing teachers who want to be better informed, to clarify their insights into what may be happening in their classrooms day by day and to obtain inspiration;
- teacher educators who can use this volume as a means of augmenting their knowledge and as a base of information from which lectures can be developed;
- course designers who could use the volume as the basis for a number of interesting and useful learner-centered courses or programs;
- researchers, for whom a multitude of areas still needing investigation is suggested.

Finally, not least, it is for those who have been involved in the field of language education over the last 30 years. We owe a tribute to Joan for her insight and her perseverance in getting her seminal article published. We also owe a debt to the many who have toiled in the field since then. Two people whom I would especially like to mention and who have had

a major influence on my own thinking and work, and on whose advice and support I have depended while compiling this volume are Andrew Cohen and Rebecca Oxford. The fact that they are referred to in almost every chapter in this book testifies to the breadth of their influence and the debt owed to them by those of us who have come later to the field.

As editor, I have tried to ensure that all the chapters in this book, though inevitably having their own style, are highly readable, with a consistency of structure that provides coherence to the book as a whole. To all of you, our readers, I hope you find this book informative and enjoyable. And, perhaps most importantly, I hope it inspires you to continue with the work which remains to be done investigating how successful language development can be promoted. Good language learners have much to teach us, and, even after 30 years, many lessons remain to be learnt.

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## Prologue

*Andrew D. Cohen*

Since this volume is commemorating Joan Rubin's seminal work on the good language learner and acknowledging the initiatives that it inspired, I thought it fitting to offer a brief prologue that will serve as an historical note regarding Joan's initial contribution to the topic of the good language learner. It is written more as a narrative since it is now in vogue to tell our stories as a means of enriching our academic experiences.

I was three years into my doctoral studies in international development education at Stanford University when I first met Joan in the fall of 1970. I had already had the pleasure of reading her study of Spanish-Guaraní bilingualism in Paraguay (Rubin, 1968) so I knew of her as a trained anthropologist and as an experienced sociolinguist. My advisor at the Committee on Linguistics at Stanford, Charles Ferguson, had told me many fine things about her.

Joan arrived at Stanford with questionnaire data she had collected in Indonesia as part of a sociolinguistic survey being conducted in various parts of the world, and her main mission was to analyze and report on the findings. I expected her to pursue her interests drawing on her survey work to make statements about language planning. What was a surprise for me at the time was to experience first hand Joan's keen fascination with the language learner and with studying the language learning act up close and personal. She was determined to pursue an interest in better understanding how language learners did what they did and why.

For those of you who don't know Joan Rubin, you need to know that she is a person with an impressive abundance of energy. When she takes on tasks, she takes them on with gusto. She became determined to explore the nature of students' participation in language classes, and she used Stanford's language program as a convenient vehicle for this exploration. She started sitting in on French, German, and Spanish classes and following what learners were doing in class. She would watch them as they attended to class activities, she listened attentively when individual students spoke up in class, and she also observed what they wrote in their notebooks – even taking notes on what they took notes on. During the breaks, she would go up to the students she was observing and would ask them about things they had written down in their notebooks. She

wanted to better understand their rationale for doing what she observed them to be doing.

In order to situate Joan's activities within the current instructional context at that time, it could be said that the field of instruction, and specifically language instruction, wasn't really interested then in the learner's side. What was considered important was for teachers to have their instructional act together. This was seen as the key to success. In fact, at Stanford's School of Education, the emphasis was not just on teaching, but on micro-level teaching. My wife obtained her degree in that program, where the emphasis was on videotaping of teachers engaged in what was referred to as "microteaching" (based on the work of Dwight Allen, who had been on the Stanford faculty until 1967). A typical unit, for example, would focus on teachers' questioning techniques. There was no focus at the time on what the learners were doing. It was assumed that good teaching automatically meant good learning.

The reason I knew about Joan's activities is that we would meet periodically for lunch and she would tell me a bit about what she was doing and what she was finding. I must admit that at first it seemed totally off the wall to me. Given the educational context at that time, it was like the Wright brothers telling people about their ideas for a "flying machine." Just as that seemed a bit misguided at best when these two brothers first broached the topic, so too the thrust that Joan was taking didn't seem so valuable to me at first. Some might even have branded her a "heretic" in some respects since, in her focus on students as a key part of the instructional process, she wasn't toeing the party line.

Still, probably due largely to Joan's strength of character, it didn't take her long to convince me, and it started me thinking about learners and their approaches to learning. In fact, it was from interacting with Joan that I first started looking at language learner strategies. Even though I had studied seven languages other than English, I hadn't conceived of the learner's act in the way Joan was dealing with it. But then I began to see that she was truly onto something.

The real challenge for Joan, however, was in getting her ideas published. She wrote up her insights in the form of a paper on what the good language learner can teach us and wasn't able to find a publisher for it for a few years. Her paper had been circulating for perhaps four years before the *TESOL Quarterly* published it in 1975 – a clear indication that the field wasn't ready for this new direction at that time.

I think that all of us who have benefited from this learner perspective over the years are thrilled that Joan Rubin pursued her goal to raise consciousness about the language learner. In retrospect, we can see that the publication of the article helped to mobilize a movement of concerned language educators. The appearance of the article helped give

momentum to the launching of a series of TESOL conference colloquia that a number of us participated in along with Joan Rubin (for instance, Anita Wenden, Michael O'Malley, Anna Chamot, David Mendelsohn, Martha Nyikos, and others) at the end of the 1970s/beginning of the 1980s.

So, scroll ahead about 25 more years, and the focus on the language learner is clearly well-established, as witnessed by this robust collection of chapters by a cross-section of leading and upcoming specialists in the field. The issue is no longer whether to look at learners, but rather what to look at and how to do it. We have come a long way since 1970, when Joan was a voice in the wilderness. The field has come of age, thanks largely to Joan's initial pioneering efforts. It is inspiring to see that Joan Rubin has continued to be active in the field and that she herself shares her current work in this volume.

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## Reflections

Joan Rubin

Perhaps the most important change in the field of language research and teaching since my 1975 publication “What the ‘Good Language Learner’ Can Teach Us” is the clear recognition the field now gives to the role of learning as a critical component in the process of teaching, with an acceptance that the two are inseparable from one another and that teachers need to place importance not only on the target language but also on the learning process. In addition, there has been a radical change in research and teaching giving increased recognition and attention to the critical role of learners in shaping their own learning.

The teaching field did not always recognize the relationship of learning to teaching. This lacuna is perhaps best exemplified by an experience I had in the mid-1980s in a phone call from a Russian instructor, trained in the strong Russian pedagogical tradition, who called and asked “I understand you’re interested in teaching?” “No,” I replied, “I’m interested in learning.” “Oh!” he said, “GOODBYE!!”

Clear recognition of the close relationship of teaching and learning can be found in current teacher training books. Examples include: Nunan (1988) *The Learner Centered Curriculum*, which presents curriculum as a collaborative effort between teachers and learners, and stresses the need for a differentiated curriculum for different learners; Cook and Cook (2001) *Second Language Learning and Teaching* and Brown (2000) *Principles of Language Learning and Teaching*, both of which put “learning” before “teaching” in their titles and encourage teachers to use techniques which approach learners as individuals.

Further evidence of this trend to involve learners in the process includes manuals for teachers to enable learners to begin to take charge of their learning. For instance: Willing (1989) *Teaching How to Learn*; Oxford (1990) *Language Learning Strategies: What Every Teacher Should Know*; Wenden (1991) *Learner Strategies for Learner Autonomy*; Chamot, Barnhardt, El-Dinary, and Robbins (1999) *The Learning Strategies Handbook*.

In addition, there are manuals that directly provide learners with the knowledge and skills to begin to take charge of their learning, such as: Rubin and Thompson (1994) *How to Be a More Successful Language Learner*; Ellis and Sinclair (1989) *Learning to Learn English*; Brown



(1991) *Breaking the Language Barrier: Creating Your Own Pathway to Success*; Peace Corps (2000) *Volunteer On-Going Language Learning Manual*; Paige, Cohen, Kappler, Chi, and Lassegard (2002) *Maximizing Study Abroad*.

Additional evidence of the focus on the learner can be seen in the research on style (Ehrman, 1996; Reid, 1995) and on individual differences (Skehan, 1989; Dörnyei, 2005). Clear evidence of the shift toward including the learner in both research and teaching and of how far the field has come since 1975 is the recent statement by Magnan (2005, p. 315) who observes that one of the basic issues in language acquisition is the need to consider: “Who are our learners? What are they learning? What do they wish to learn? Where and how are they learning? and What is our role in their learning process?”

Perhaps the most basic modification to thinking about good language learners since my 1975 article is the recognition that, although good learners use strategies, not all strategies are created equal. Starting in about 1990, in the writings of O'Malley and Chamot (1990), Oxford (1990), Wenden (1991) and Chamot (1994), the difference between cognitive and metacognitive strategies became clearer and more critical. Based on the work of Flavell, but applied to language learning by Wenden (1998), the cognitive/metacognitive distinction evolved into a clear separation of *knowledge* from *self-management* and eventually into what Rubin (2001), following the cognitive psychologist Butler (1997), called *knowledge and procedures*. Research has shown that *knowledge* (for instance, of strategies, self, or background) will vary by learner. *Procedures* do not vary by learner but are rather the overarching management process which all expert learners use to regulate/manage their learning and which do not vary by learner but rather by task, learner goal and learner purpose.

The ability to self-manage can perhaps explain why the “good language learner is [. . .] comfortable with uncertainty [. . .] and willing to try out his guesses” (Rubin, 1975, p. 45) since the learner knows/has experienced the fact that learning is dynamic and changing and accepts a certain level of uncertainty as part of the nature of the process. Hence, since expert learners recognize that change is an integral part of the learning process, they are more comfortable with uncertainty. There is increasing evidence that management of learning is critical to success. Evidence for this can be seen in the diary of Henze (Rubin and Henze, 1981), and the report of Huang (1984). Such management must attend both to the type of task (Vann and Abraham, 1990; Abraham and Vann, 1987) as well as the general culture used to learn a particular subject (Uhrig, 2004).

One other thing we have learned is that it is not the *presence* or *absence* of a strategy that leads to effective learning; rather it is *how* that

strategy is used (or not used) to accomplish tasks and learner goals. Ehrman, Leaver, and Oxford (2003) acknowledge that in order to be useful a strategy must relate well to the task at hand, must fit the particular student's learning style preferences to one degree or another, and must be employed effectively and linked with other relevant strategies. As Dörnyei (2005) notes, it is the operationalization of the strategy that is critical, not the strategy, in and of itself.

### **Implications for the teaching/learning situation**

My 1975 article pointed to the possibility of incorporating “learning to learn” into our teaching/learning methods in order to “lessen the difference between the good learner and the poorer one” (p. 50). Since then, several experiments have been carried out to show the impact of learner instruction on performance. Probably the most comprehensive review is that conducted by Macaro, Vanderplank, and Graham (2005). Teaching students how to learn has the potential to greatly enhance their learning ability if we can find ways of instructing them effectively.

A recent experiment reported by Rubin and McCoy (2005) demonstrated that providing instruction even to highly unmotivated learners can lead to a significant increase in learners' ability to do task analysis. Further, the experimental group outperformed the control group on the final exam. These results (reported later in this volume) appear to support the belief that effective procedural instruction can improve a student's performance.

Another area that is increasingly gaining attention, especially for those whose task is to enable learners to reach the most advanced levels of language competence, is providing learners with the ability to analyze genre in order to better plan for learning. Paltridge (2001), Byrnes (2002) and Ryshina-Pankova (2005) provide examples of how this is being incorporated into language learning curricula and classroom teaching.

### **Questions for ongoing research**

An area only hinted at in my 1975 article, that there are different kinds of good language learners, needs more exploration. Much more research needs to be conducted to profile the range of variables, such as those considered in the present volume, that leads to good language learning. What are the combinations of factors which lead to success?

Also, we need to know more about how to develop teachers' abilities to promote learner self-management. Many teachers genuinely want to

help their students to learn to regulate their own learning, but they simply do not know how to go about doing this. In the face of contradictory messages from the literature, possible opposition from their educational establishments, and, perhaps, reluctance from the very students they are trying to help, busy teachers are likely to simply give up and follow the traditional teacher-centred line of least resistance. They need training and support if they are to be willing and able to effectively develop their students' abilities to manage their own learning. How can this goal best be achieved?

## Conclusion

Although many teachers and texts give a strong nod in the direction of learner-centered learning, changing the paradigm and providing the necessary knowledge and skills for teachers has proven to be quite daunting. Perhaps the task is larger and more complex than many of us realized 30 years ago. Focusing on a complex, dynamic, situated learning process, and providing the necessary knowledge and skills takes much more time for both learners and teachers to understand and be able to use than might have been predicted.

While more and more teachers are recognizing the importance of a variety of factors that affect learners, many still adhere to an older model that defines their job as providing information in a fixed fashion, regardless of learner differences. Recently, while giving a workshop on learner self-management, a teacher told me that if he did not give learners all the correct answers and all necessary information, he would be failing his responsibility as a teacher. Attitudes like this are not uncommon. So while many aspects of the field have come a long way, actual practice still has a way to go.

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# **Part I:   Learner variables**





# 1 Motivation and good language learners

*Ema Ushioda*

It almost goes without saying that good language learners are motivated. Common sense and everyday experience suggest that the high achievers of this world have motivation, a word which derives from the Latin verb *movere* meaning to move. Thus, simply defined, we might say that motivation concerns what moves a person to make certain choices, to engage in action, and to persist in action. The need for personal motivation is a message that resonates across so many stories of major and minor human endeavor, whether in the single-minded dedication of an athlete pursuing an Olympic dream, the drive and ambition of a young executive aiming for the top of the corporate ladder, or the willpower and self-discipline of someone determined to lose weight or to give up smoking. Without motivation, success will be hard to come by, and the case of learning a second or foreign language is little different. Motivation is listed by Rubin (1975) among the three essential variables on which good language learning depends. As Corder (1967, p. 164) famously put it forty years ago, “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.” Yet however commonsensical this general observation might be, the pursuit of its empirical verification has exercised language acquisition scholars for decades and generated an enormous amount of research.

## The social-psychological perspective

Led by the pioneering work of Canadian social psychologists Gardner and Lambert (1972), research into motivation was for many years shaped by social-psychological perspectives on learner attitudes to target language cultures and people. Gardner and Lambert argued that language learning motivation was qualitatively different from other forms of learning motivation, since language learning entails much more than acquiring a body of knowledge and developing a set of skills. On top of this, the language learner must also be willing “to identify with members of another ethnolinguistic group and to take on very subtle aspects of their behavior, including their distinctive style of speech and

their language” (Gardner and Lambert, 1972, p. 135). Gardner and Lambert speculated that learners’ underlying attitudes to the target language culture and people would have a significant influence on their motivation and thus their success in learning the language.

This speculation gave rise to the now classic distinction between *integrative* and *instrumental* orientations, the former reflecting a sincere and personal interest in the target language, people, and culture and the latter its practical value and advantages (Gardner and Lambert, 1972). A substantial body of largely correlational research was generated to explore the hypothesis that integratively motivated learners are likely to be successful language learners in the long run. While findings have been to some extent mixed (for a recent meta-analysis, see Masgoret and Gardner, 2003), there is little doubt that the concept of integrative motivation and the social-psychological angle of inquiry powerfully shaped the way language learner motivation was theorized and empirically explored until the early 1990s. So much so that Skehan (1989, p. 61) suggested that “almost all other writing on motivation therefore seems to be a commentary, in one way or another, on the agenda established by Gardner.”

At the risk of over-simplifying the social-psychological legacy of research on language learning motivation, however, I think it is true to say that the angle of inquiry it promoted yielded few genuinely useful insights for teachers and learners. Despite evolving from a social-psychological model (Gardner and Lambert, 1972) to a socio-educational model of language learning (Gardner, 1988), Gardner’s theory and the research it generated came under sharp criticism for failing to take adequate account of the classroom context of learner motivation (see in particular Crookes and Schmidt, 1991). At bottom, this failure may simply be a reflection of the rather different concerns of researchers and teachers (Ushioda, 1996). It is only within the last decade or so that we have witnessed more productive interaction between the interests of researchers and teachers. Crookes and Schmidt’s (1991) seminal critique of the social-psychological tradition and their call for a more practitioner-validated classroom-based concept of motivation marked the beginning of an unprecedented wave of discussion among motivation scholars during the 1990s (for a review, see Dörnyei, 1998). This “motivational renaissance” (Gardner and Tremblay, 1994, p. 526) led to a broadening of the research agenda and a move towards what Dörnyei (2001a, pp. 103–105) has called more “education-friendly” approaches to language learner motivation which provide potentially much richer insights for teachers and learners.