

# Examining the Key Variables in Foreign Language Learning—A Case Study

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**Abstract**—Learning variables such as motivation, aptitude, attitude, learning strategies, personality and learning environment are deemed by English Language Teaching (ELT) researchers as crucial in contributing to a learner's language achievement. This study focuses on the interrelated nature of these variables and examines how they affect language learners' learning outcomes. The main purpose of this study was to find out about the complex network of these variables as well as the individual differences among learners. The data for this study were collected through interviews. The participants were seven Chinese English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners who were residing in Canada.

The study has yielded a number of interesting findings. One notable finding is that there seems to be some intricate interrelationships between learner characteristics (e.g., perseverance, attitude, motivation) and learner achievement. It appears that the role that learner perseverance and inner drive to learn play in their learning outcomes is as equally important as their learning environment and aptitude. Another conspicuous finding is that a correlation seems to exist between aptitude, motivation and success. Specifically, the higher aptitude learners exhibit, the more highly motivated they become and in turn, the more success they are likely to attain.

The pedagogical implications from the study lies in the need to inform EFL teachers of the intricate interrelationships of the learning variables to help them better understand the complexities underlying the language learning process and enhance teacher training in how to make their teaching more truly communicative in nature.

**Keywords**—learning variable; motivation; aptitude; learning strategy; L2

## I. INTRODUCTION

Learning a Second Language (L2) or Foreign Language (FL) is a complex and multifaceted process. Language teachers have often been puzzled by the dilemma of why some learners learn a language quickly and successfully, while others, given the same opportunities to learn, fail at the task. A review of the literature reveals that to successfully acquire a language not only depends on the amount of time and efforts one spends on it, but also depends on the complex interplay of a large number

of variables (Gass and Selinker, 2001; Gardner, 1985; Spolsky, 1989; Wen, 1996, 2001; Wen & Johnson, 1997).

The variables that are identified by Second Language Acquisition (SLA) researchers and practitioners as relating to L2 success can count up to 74 (Spolsky, 1989). The most commonly cited are age, motivation, aptitude, linguistic input, personality, strategy and opportunity to interact socially with speakers of the target language. Apart from Wen (1996), and Wen and Johnson (1997), which probes into the relationship between 16 learner variables and learner achievement, much of the research concerning students' language learning examines the relations between particular variables in isolation from other factors. Some of these studies have focused on students' attitudes and motivation (Gardner 1985, 1988; Gardner & Lambert, 1972; Wen, 1996); some on students' metacognitive strategies (Wenden, 1986; Oxford, 1990, 1999; Wen, 1996; Wen & Johnson, 1997); some on students' cognitive strategies (Rubin, 1975; Skehan, 1998; Vann and Abraham, 1990). Although each variable may more or less influence language learning outcomes either directly or indirectly, they cannot provide an overall picture of the acquisition of L2. To get a consistent picture of a successful L2 learner, there is a need to examine the interrelated nature of these variables.

This study seeks to explore the interrelated nature of these variables and examine how they affect language learners' learning outcomes. As it is impossible to cope with all the possible variables in a single article, here, I have chosen to focus on only a handful of major factors.

The data for this study were collected through interviews. The questions for the interviews were generated from a number of sources (Gass & Selinker, 2001; Gardner, 1985; Spolsky, 1989). Seventy-three questions were finally adopted. They consist of five sections. Section A addresses personal details including age, gender and highest education level completed. Section B examines the interviewees' previous English learning history. Section C is designed to assess the learners' proficiency level. Section D focuses on the learning contexts of the participants. It can be divided into two subparts: one part examines the participants' classroom setting; the other part probes into their learning environment outside class. Section E is concerned about learners' attitudes toward the language, the culture and the people, their motivation, personality and

learning strategies. A copy of the interview protocol is included in the Appendix.

## II. METHODOLOGY

### A. Purpose of Study

The aim of this study is to gain a better understanding of the interrelationships of various learning variables and how these variables contribute to achievement.

### B. Data Collection Procedures

Prior to the administration of interviews, the first version of the interview protocol was piloted and revised accordingly. All the interview sessions were conducted in English. They were semi-structured, conducted in a systematic and consistent order but allowing the interviewer sufficient freedom to probe far beyond the answers to the prepared questions (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). Each interview lasted approximately one hour. All the interviews were audiorecorded and then transcribed. Following that, the transcripts were analyzed for patterns and commonalities.

### C. Profile of the Participants

The participants were made up of three females and four males. All of them were in their early or mid thirties except one, who was under the age of 30. They all reported studying English throughout secondary school and university. Five of them obtained a master's degree in China, while two held a bachelor's degree. They all continued to learn English after graduation from university. Their English learning experience ranged from 18 years to 25 years, with an average of 22 years. They all claimed that by the time of their arrival in Canada they had been learning English for more than 15 years. Table 1 presents the general characteristics of the participants.

TABLE I. GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE CASE-STUDY PARTICIPANTS

Participant	Sex	Age	Degree	No. of years of learning English
P1	Male	28	B.A.	18
P2	Male	31	M.A.	22
P3	Female	34	M.A.	24
P4	Male	33	M.A.	22
P5	Female	35	M.A.	25
P6	Female	32	B.A.	22
P7	Male	36	M.A.	25

## III. DATA ANALYSIS

### A. Data analysis

#### 1) Participants' L2 Learning History and Linguistic Environment

##### a) Context within class

In the interviews, the participants invariably expressed their dissatisfaction with their EFL teachers and the type of instruction they had received both in secondary school and university in China. Based on their accounts, their teachers simply followed the same traditional instructional pattern: 1) new words and expressions are explained in Chinese before the

lecture is given; 2) the text is read aloud either by the teacher or by students; 3) the text is explained paragraph by paragraph, with sentences analyzed grammatically and translated into Chinese. According to the participants, apart from activities such as reading texts aloud and translation, rarely were they given the chance of using English for the purposes of communication.

When recounting the current Chinese English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction, P6 expressed her frustration over it, saying:

“The activities were both limited and monotonous. The only activity I can remember having participated in was a presentation I gave in a class run by a foreign teacher”.

It should be noted that the participants could hardly have sufficient exposure to the language in such instructional contexts.

##### b) Context outside class

In addition to the classroom exposure, the participants stated that they had gone out of their ways to learn and to be exposed to the language outside class. However, the forms of English they were exposed to were varied. With respect to the form and amount of language exposure outside class, the participants could be classified into two categories – “perseverant learner(s)” (PL) and “less perseverant learner(s)” (LPL). The majority of participants (P1, P2, P3, P4 and P5) labeled themselves as PLs, while two of them (P6, P7) called themselves LPLs. As a rule, more spare time was allocated to the study of English per week by PLs than by the LPLs. On the average, the weekly time spent on the study of English by PLs was 4-5 hours. In comparison, the average time devoted to English by the LPL was 1-2 hours. The PLs impressed me as committed and competent English learners, though their levels of proficiency may differ at varying degrees in terms of the four skills—listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Two of them (P3 and P4) were found to be more fluent in their oral English, whereas three of them (P1, P2 and P5) claimed to be stronger in reading and writing. For example, P3 and P4 were particularly interested in English pronunciation and intonation. They paid very much attention to the enhancement of their oral skills. They believed that they had a talent for mimicry. As they were crazy about English talk shows and movies, their means of learning English outside the class were mostly English programs on television and movies. Their exposure to English outside classroom counted up to four hours weekly. Overall, the PLs were keen on reading English books, journal articles, newspapers and magazines, and watching English programs on TV. Most of them also had a social circle of people they could converse with in English. In comparison to them, the LPLs simply used English textbooks or test papers as the source of their reading material.

The proficiency tests the participants took were either Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) or International English Language Testing System (IELTS). All of them obtained a score above the average except P6, who was still

spending a lot of time doing test-related exercises. Nevertheless, although their TOEFL or IELTS scores are often taken as an indicator of the general levels of learners' proficiency, the test failed to assess their oral proficiency in a sufficient way. Through my personal contact with the participants, we found that only P3 and P4 were strong in their oral English. Owing to their marvelous English oral proficiency, they have succeeded in finding a job soon after their graduation. However, their test scores did not show this strength. In the meantime, we found that despite P7's relatively high score on the TOEFL, he could hardly convey his ideas in English. It appears that a mismatch exists between the participants' oral proficiency and their scores on the TOEFL or IELTS. Thus, in this article the TOEFL and IELTS scores were not taken as the only determiner of the participants' English proficiency. We rated them either 'successful' (S) or 'unsuccessful' (U) language learners not only based on their scores, but also based on my knowledge of them. Table 2 provides some general information on the participants' history of learning English and the linguistic environment they have been immersed in.

TABLE II. LEARNING HISTORY AND LINGUISTIC ENVIRONMENT

	Participant	Learning Achievement	Strength in terms of English Proficiency	Satisfaction with teachers	Form of English exposure	Weekly time devoted to the study of English (hs)
G1 (PLs)	P1	S	Reading & writing	No	Books, newspapers	5
	P2	S	Reading & writing	Yes	Books, magazines	6
	P3	S	Listening & speaking	No	English programs on TV, movies	4
	P4	S	Listening & speaking	No	VOA, English movies	4
	P5	S	Reading & writing	No	journal articles, newspapers	5
G2 (LPLs)	P6	U	None	No	English textbooks, testing exercises	2
	P7	U	Reading	No	English textbooks	1

## 2) Personal Characteristics

Although the participants came from the same language-learning context, they differed in innumerable ways in terms of personal characteristics. In this section, factors such as aptitude, attitude, motivation and personality are examined and discussed.

### a) Aptitude

With respect to their aptitude for language learning, there is considerable difference among the participants. Some participants (P2, P3 and P4) perceived themselves as having particularly high levels of foreign language aptitude. They believed themselves quickly adept at languages. They admitted that they had been fast learners relative to their classmates, but others (P1, P5, P6, and P7), on the other hand, were unconvinced of their own language learning abilities. P1 and

P5 stated that when they were studying in senior high schools, they had to devote more time to the study of English than other subjects. Thus they were not quite sure that they were superior to others in language learning abilities. However, they acknowledged that their grades did not show such an inferiority, which, according to them, may attribute to their perseverance.

### b) Attitude

Relatively speaking, P2, P3 and P4 showed more personal initiative in their L2 learning process. Although they were not very satisfied with the instructional method employed by their teachers, they claimed that they never let it weaken their own enthusiasm about learning the language. To them, learning English was fun. In contrast, the other participants did not show as much enthusiasm about it as they did. When asked about how they felt about the English language itself, they replied saying that it was useful.

Despite the variance in their enthusiasm about the language, all of the participants have nurtured warm feelings for the L2 culture and people. They all claimed that they appreciated the culture and were comfortable with the English-speaking people. Nevertheless, apart from P6, the participants did not believe that the ESL context gave them an advantage in learning the language over the EFL context. P2, P3 and P4 held the belief that what made a difference were learners themselves. According to them, as long as they themselves had great incentive to learn, they could excel regardless of what context they were in.

### c) Motivation

The interview data reveals important differences among the learners in motivation traits. What merits attention is that the participants' motivation has changed over time. They started to learn English between the ages of 9 and 12. At that time, their sole purpose for studying English was to pass various types of exams. Naturally the motivation they derived at that time was extrinsic, for the impetus for acquiring this foreign language came from outside (Dornyei, 2003; Gardner, 2001). It was not until after graduation that they started to develop their own motivation to learn the language. After graduation, the motives of P2, P3 and P4 for learning English turned to be more and more intrinsic. As seen in 'Attitude', they had an inner drive to learn. For them, learning English was no longer seen as a job. Instead, it was viewed as a hobby and later, with the marked improvement in their language skills, it was viewed as a challenge. It appears that the more successful they were, the more motivated they became and in turn, the more success they attained. But it is interesting to note that their motivation was instrumental, as well, because they believed that learning English well could increase their job opportunities. In their case, we see a natural evolution of different motivating forces at different learning stages. Their learning experience gave us a better picture of how different motivational and attitudinal influences evolve over time. The motivation of P1, P5, P6, and P7, on the other hand, also evolved after graduation. But it was still extrinsic and instrumental, because what motivated P1 and P5, and P7 to continue to learn English

was either to pursue academic or professional development, while the motivational force for P6 was to become a graduate student. In addition to motivation types, there is also variability in the amount of motivation that has been exhibited by the participants. A case in point is that the less successful learners (P6 and P7) seemed to be less motivated than successful learners (P1– P5), for most of their time was spent on other things (e.g., shopping, watching TV, traveling, etc.) rather than the improvement of their English. The inference that can be drawn from the above cases is that irrespective of the type of motivations, a correlation seems to exist between the amount of motivation and learner proficiency in English.

### 3) *Personality*

It is notable that the seven participants differ significantly in their personality. Obviously P1, P5, P6, and P7's learning styles were extrovert, for they tended to rely more on external forces such as feedback from others, while P2, P3, and P4 tended to derive the inner strength within themselves. Thus, the learning styles of P2, P3, and P4 were introvert. Furthermore, the data indicates that P6 was typically ambiguity intolerant in that she preferred to know what each L2 word meant when she was reading, writing, and listening to English. The other learners, on the other hand, differed in that P1, P2, P5 and P7 were ambiguity tolerant in reading, while P3 and P4 were ambiguity tolerant in listening. This learning style may have a direct effect on P3 and P4's high proficiencies in listening and P1, P2 and P5's high proficiencies in reading.

### 4) *Learning Strategies*

The results of the study demonstrate that the participants differ from one another in their choice of strategies when learning English. Strategies such as memorizing words and making comparisons between two or more English words were favored by the majority of them (P1, P2, P4, P5, P6). But their preference for other strategies may differ. According to P1, P2, P3, and P5, guessing word meanings was a very effective strategy. In the case of P4, dictation and recitation of English passages are useful strategies for learning English. For P2 and P3, a good command of L1 contributes to L2. However, when asked about the strategy of making comparisons using L1 and L2, P4 and P7 said that it was not applicable. In their view, if the comparison was made between English and French, it might be effective to a certain extent; however, it would be very difficult to compare Chinese with English, because the two languages not only differ markedly in grammar, but also have no overlap in vocabulary. The implication of this assertion might be that strategies can be beneficial only when they are used tactically. The data suggests that the choice of strategies made by learners may be influenced by a combination of personal and situational factors. Nevertheless, the findings from this study do not suffice to say that strategy use relates strongly to proficiency. It seems that the proficiency differences may have more to do with appropriate choice of strategies than sheer strategy use.

## IV. DISCUSSION

A close examination of the data reveals that while the seven learners were of very different personalities, and their learning styles and learning strategies varied considerably, there do seem to be some patterns of the variables that are common to all of them. The most salient variables identified in this study are aptitude, motivation, learning styles and learning environment.

Aptitude and motivation for learning L2 have long been issues of concern among L2 educators (Carroll, 1990; Skehan, 1989, 1998) in their search to understand individual variations in FL learning ability. Skehan (1989, 1998) has called language aptitude one of the central individual differences in language learning. According to him, aptitude is one of the most successful predictors of language learning success. He contended that there exist two different profiles of language aptitude---some learners possess an analytic aptitude, and others are more memory-oriented. In this study, three participants (P1, P2, and P5) are typically memory-oriented in terms of reading, for they have displayed exceptional talent for memorizing new vocabulary in the process of reading, while P4 is memory-oriented in terms of listening, for he exhibited his talent for memorizing words and phrases in the course of listening. Despite the difference in the type of skill involved, the language aptitude they seem to possess is memory-related. It appears that this aptitude relates to their strategy preference. As discussed in 'Strategy', their favorite learning strategy is memorizing words. It is assumed that these two factors — aptitude and strategy have more or less contributed to P1, P2, and P5's superior levels of reading and writing as well as P4's high levels of listening and speaking. However, the case of P3 is different from that of P4. P3 showed an aptitude for imitation and pronunciation. Her sensitive awareness of sound differences might be a reason which accounted for her near-native pronunciation. The data also demonstrated that this awareness or aptitude was associated with her accurate production of intonation patterns. Gardner's (1985) concept of multiple intelligences is relevant here. He grouped human capabilities into seven categories, which he called 'intelligences': verbal-linguistic, visual-spatial, logical-mathematical, body-kinesthetic, musical-rhythmic, interpersonal, and intrapersonal. Based on Gardner, each person possesses all seven intelligences to varying degrees. Drawing on Gardner's theory, P3's high oral proficiency should be attributed to her extraordinary verbal-linguistic talent.

In addition to aptitude, another variable which is frequently mentioned with regard to good language learning is that of motivation. The data from this study showed a correlation between motivation and success, supporting similar findings that motivation is related to L2 achievement (Gardner and Lambert, 1972; Rubin, 1975; Skehan, 1989). Despite the change in the form of motivation, throughout their learning history, the participants in this study had strong drive to learn and improve their English. This, in the long run, proved to have direct effects on their language learning achievement.

However, from the study, there is little evidence that illustrates which type of motivation is more likely to lead to success. As shown in the previous section, P2, P3, and P4's motivation shifted from instrumental and extrinsic to instrumental and intrinsic. Here we see the somewhat unusual juxtaposition of instrumental and intrinsic motivation. In spite of the apparent contradiction implied by the juxtaposition of instrumental and intrinsic motivation, their motivation continued to be a positive driving force. On the other hand, the motivation of all the participants, though remained instrumental in form, served different purposes. First they studied to pass the exams and after graduation they (except P6) studied for the purpose of professional development. Although the data revealed important differences among the learners in motivation traits, the amount of motivation that drove them to learn and improve English seemed to be the same. The results of the study showed that it may be the case that the participants perceived a greater utilitarian value to their target language and, thus had higher learning goals. Another assumption that can be made in this study was that learning outcomes may be affected by the amount of the motivation, but not by the type of motivation. This finding supports Gardner's claim that it is the overall amount, not necessarily the type of motivation that counts most in SLA. The findings also demonstrated that success makes a learner more motivated to do well and being more motivated makes one more successful. This assertion coincides with that of Oxford (1990): the higher the proficiency level a learner has, the more motivated the learner is.

Contrary to the findings that instructional factors have direct effects on English achievement (Wenden, 1986; Wen & Johnson, 1996; Wen, 2001), the findings from this study showed that instructional factors did not have a positive effect on learning. Instead of ascribing their success to the formal instruction, the participants (P1 - P5) attributed their achievement to the learning environment they were exposed to outside class. Since their opportunities to learn in instructional settings did not accommodate their language needs, they sought out opportunities to learn and use the language outside class (read newspapers and magazines, watched movies, listened to T.V. or the radio, and practiced English with other learners). Based on their views, this exposure to English outside class accounted more for their success. This finding also suggested that successful learners do not passively do what is assigned to them by the teachers in the classroom.

Other factors such as age, personality and learning strategies are also found to positively affect the participants' learning achievement. Nevertheless, due to the limited space of this article, they cannot be dealt with in detail. What must be stressed is that these variables are often interrelated. An individual with lots of aptitude and motivation but with little opportunities to use English in their learning context may have difficulty acquiring a language. If a good English learning environment is present, but there is little motivation or low aptitude, then we may expect that the language learning will proceed slowly. Equally, a person with lots of natural ability

and opportunity may also fail if he does not have sufficient motivation.

## V. CONCLUSION

The findings reveal that the factors involved in learning achievement (e.g., learning strategies, learning styles and personality traits) may vary not only from context to context, but also from learner to learner. One possible reason why they are context-dependent is that in China where opportunities for learners to engage in communicative activities are limited, affective factors like attitude and motivation seem to be more crucial to success. Meanwhile, they are learner-sensitive in that owing to the variance among learners in personality, learning styles, strategy preferences and motivational traits, factors that contribute to learning achievement may vary greatly from learner to learner. In this regard, we should expect that there would be many different kinds of successful language learners. Such results demonstrate that both learners' internal factors and contextual factors (institutional and societal) may contribute to their learning outcomes. However, while the study has added an important dimension to our understanding of the key variables in foreign language learning, it is difficult to ensure that it has adequately covered all the factors that contribute to learner achievement. Therefore more extensive studies need to be conducted to explore how various forces are combined to produce varying cases of learning outcomes.

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#### APPENDIX – INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

##### A. Biographic Background

age \_\_\_\_\_

gender: M \_\_\_\_\_ F \_\_\_\_\_

highest education level completed \_\_\_\_\_

area of study \_\_\_\_\_

##### B. Previous English Learning History

1) years of learning English in EFL context \_\_\_\_\_

2) years of learning English in ESL context \_\_\_\_\_

3) time and place when you were first exposed to English \_\_\_\_\_

4) How many hours did you learn English per week in the EFL context? How many hours did you learn English in the ESL context? Were there breaks of time when you stopped studying the language?

##### C. Proficiency Level

1) How do you assess yourself as an English learner: beginner, intermediate, or advanced? Why?

2) For what purposes do you use English? (e.g. social, academic, professional)

3) Do you have difficulty understanding English (e.g. lecture, news on TV and radio)?

4) Can you clearly express yourself in English (e.g. introduce yourself, ask questions, make inquiry)?

5) Do you have trouble reading English publications (e.g. newspapers, magazines, academic reading, literature, road signs)?

6) Do you often write in English in your daily life (e.g. emails, letters to friends, formal business letters, academic papers, class assignments)? Is it hard for you?

7) Have you ever taken any proficiency test (e.g. TOEFL, GRE, GMAT, SAT, CET)? How much score did you get? Are you satisfied with the test results?

8) In the proficiency test, what areas are you strong in (e.g. reading, writing, listening, speaking)? What areas are you weak in?

##### D. Learning context

1) In what type of setting did you learn English (second versus foreign language setting or both)?

2) Did you learn English in the classroom or were you only exposed to it outside the classroom (or Both)?

3) In either classroom or naturalistic setting, did you have access to other forms of English (e.g. watching TV, listening to English programs, writing to pen pals on line)?

4) How much was your exposure to English outside the classroom measured in hours/per week? Why?

5) Did you have a social circle of people you can converse with in English?

6) Did you enjoy the learning environment (classroom vs outside class)?

7) What activities did you usually do in the English class?

8) Did you have many chances to speak in an English class apart from answering homework questions or supplying answers for grammatical exercises?

9) Did you sometimes participate in group discussions in class (e.g. sharing your opinion or something, having real spontaneous conversation)?

##### E. Personal characteristics

###### 1) Aptitude

a) Do you think learning English is easier/more difficult than any other kind of learning?

b) How do you rate your own ability to learn English relative to others in general? (Poor, below average, average, above average, superior)

c) Did you need to spend more/less time than the average students while you were learning English to meet the course requirement?

d) Which areas of learning English were easy for you (i.e. pronunciation, listening, speaking, grammar, memorizing, sociocultural, etc.)?

e) Which areas of learning English were difficult for you (i.e. pronunciation, listening, speaking, grammar, memorizing, sociocultural, etc.)?

###### 2) Attitude

a) Do you find learning English a pleasant experience?

b) Do you feel anxious, shy or worried about making grammatical/pronunciation mistakes when you talk in class?

c) What do you feel about the English language itself?

d) What do you feel about the culture and people using this language?

e) It is normal for people who live in another country to experience "culture shock". When you were living abroad, were there anything that really frustrated you? Were there

anything that you really enjoyed experiencing? Give examples.

### 3) Motivation

a) How well did you want to learn English? Did you just learn it to pass your courses/ a test or tests, to travel, to make simple conversations, to study or live abroad, to enjoy the pleasure of accomplishment of learning a language very well?

b) How has your purpose of learning English changed over time since you studied in the elementary school or secondary school (including your experience in the university and after graduation)?

c) Do you see learning English as fun, something exciting, a hobby, a job, a challenge? Are you more or less motivated when challenged by new tasks in your language learning process?

d) Does success (i.e. marks, compliments) in any form make you more motivated to do well? Or does being more motivated make you more successful? Or vice versa? Or both?

e) Did the feedback that you received for your learning context increase or decrease your motivation to learn English?

f) Do you think that one of your purposes of learning English was to integrate into the target culture?

g) Do you think your teachers (some, all, or none) motivated you to learn? How did they encourage you or make you want to learn? Give an example.

h) Did you look forward to going to class or did you dread going or did you feel neutral?

i) What were some of your favorite activities in your language class if there are any?

j) Were you required or forced to learn English? How did you feel about it?

### 4) Extrovert vs. introvert

a) When you were learning English, did you like to get feedback from your teachers and peers?

b) If you weren't sure you had a 'correct answer', did you ask someone else for reassurance?

c) Did you prefer working alone?

d) Did you understand better when participating in group work?

### 5) Tolerance of ambiguity

a) Does it bother you that sometimes you did not know exactly what the teacher was saying in English, even though you understood the general idea?

b) Did you enjoy reading something in English that took a while to figure out completely?

c) When you were speaking in English, did you worry about not being able to say what you mean?

d) Does it bother you when the teacher used an English word you did not know?

e) When you were writing in English, could you come to terms with the fact that you cannot express what you want?

### 6) Learning strategy

What strategies or what styles were most effective in learning English for you? (i.e. memorizing words/speech/passages, guessing word meaning, deducing answers to questions, asking for explanation, practicing four skills: speaking/writing/reading/listening, making comparison using L1 and L2 etc.)

### 7) Social identity

a) Are there any sounds in English that you don't have in the L1? How do you feel about using them? Are you comfortable with it?

b) If you learn English well, do you think you can get a better job, or achieve higher social status?

c) Did you feel comfortable if you were identified as a foreigner when you were abroad?

d) What kind of contact did you have with native speakers? Did you seek them out yourself? How?

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