

Advancing Motivation and Aptitude Research in Relation to Teachers' Practices and Successful L2 Learning Outcomes

Sami Ali Nasr Al-wossabi

English Language Institute, Jazan University, Jazan, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Abstract—The underlying constructs of aptitude and motivation in language learning have been a central topic in SLA research. However, issues investigated in this regard, have not substantially discussed the effect of teachers' practices on learners' motivation and language aptitude. This paper, therefore, argues that novel research is needed to examine the impact of teachers' classroom practices on stimulating learners to engage effectively in learning and improving their ability to acquire and apply L2 knowledge. Towards this end, a detailed discussion of research findings of some influential SLA work on aptitude and motivation is carried out. The aim is to trace early and recent concepts of research findings on aptitude and motivation and interpret them in the light of their practical and pedagogical relevance to the achievement of L2 learning. Based on the research synthesis, practical implications are devised with the ambition to open a new avenue for future research to examine the effect of teachers' practices on learners' aptitude and motivation and whether such effect correlates positively with foreign/second language learning. The paper ends with classroom recommendations that are meant to keep students motivated and enable them to fully exhibit their language abilities with the hope of maximum attainment in the target language.

Index Terms—language aptitude, motivation, Individual differences, language proficiency, assessment, teachers' efficacy

I. INTRODUCTION

Research in second language acquisition has a long history of addressing the question of why students show significant variation in their language achievement. Most SLA studies found that individual difference variables such as motivation, aptitude, age, personality traits, and anxiety were useful predictors of L2 proficiency. In particular, several views, theories, and models emerged in favor of L2 motivation and FL aptitude as the best predictors of language achievement (Biedron, 2015; Cao & Philp, 2006; Carrol, 1981; Cohen, 2011; Dörnyei, 2001, 2005, 2009; Ehrman, 1996; Harley & Hart, 1997; Henry et al., 2015; Kiss & Nikolov, 2005; Gardner et al., 1997, 2010; Masgoret & Gardner, 2003; Skehan, 1986, 1989).

However, SLA research focused primarily on measuring aptitude and types of motivation in predicting success or failure in language learning. The influence of teachers' practices on learners' successful L2 learning was not a major concern in SLA. Surveying the SLA literature, it is obvious that such correlation was not adequately investigated except for a few studies where learners' motivation was partially addressed considering teachers' motivation (Bess, 1997), teachers' communicative approach and feedback (Noels et al., 1999) and teachers' level of enthusiasm and commitment (Pennington, 1995).

More recently, a few studies have found a positive effect between teachers' motivational strategies and their learners' motives for learning (Moskovsky et al., 2012). Likewise, research on language aptitude mainly examined specific tasks as opposed to general achievement (Nagata et al., 1999). Yet, the impact of teachers' practices on students' motivation and language aptitude and the possible contribution of such practices to successful learning outcomes were not significantly addressed.

II. THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

A. Factors Affecting Language Acquisition

The field of SLA investigated varying contributing factors in second language acquisition such as motivation, attitude, age, intelligence, aptitude, cognitive style, and personality traits (Biedron, 2015; Cao & Philp, 2006; Carrol, 1981; Dörnyei, 2005; DeKeyser, 2013; Ehrman & Oxford, 1995; Gardner et al., 1997; Kormos, 2013; Lan & Oxford, 2003; Li, 2013; Long, 2005; MacIntyre, 2007; Noels et al., 1999; Purcell & Sutter, 1980; Skehan, 1986; Singleton, 2017). Some factors, such as motivation and aptitude were found to be more dominant and some others were equal but each of them was found to be contributing at varying levels to the success or the failure of second language acquisition.

The study of Purcell et al. (1980) investigated pronunciation accuracy in terms of eight variables identified as affecting language acquisition. Only 4 variables were found to be useful in predicting pronunciation accuracy. The

findings revealed the following; 1) 42% of variance accounted for learner's first language 2) 55.9 % of variance accounted for aptitude for oral mimicry, 3) 63.2 % of variance accounted for residency in the target language country and living with a native speaker, and 4) 67.3 % of variance accounted for concern with pronunciation accuracy.

In the above study, the language classroom environment had little or no effect on pronunciation accuracy. The implication to be withdrawn is that the classroom environment could be more effective if teachers strived to provide more authentic language tasks in a more comfortable environment where students could be more motivated to practice accurate pronunciation. Also, Purcell limited the languages in the study to Japanese, Thai, Arabic, and Persian. This brings up the question; *would students whose first language is a cognate language mimic or accurately copy pronunciation better than students whose language is a non-cognate language?* The study also addressed students' concerns about learning more accurate pronunciation and whether this concern could affect their motivation to improve pronunciation. Further practical interpretations could be inferred if considering the following questions;

1. Is it possible for teachers to motivate students to pronounce sounds that do not exist in their first language, especially if a student does not have a good ear or the aptitude for oral mimicry?
2. Should teachers' expectations for accurate pronunciation be less or more considering their students' language aptitude and motivation level?
3. Should more emphasis be placed on the ability and willingness to communicate rather than the ability and willingness to accurately mimic a native speaker of the target language?

Gardner et al. (1997) investigated the relationship between language achievement and several individual differences such as language attitudes, motivation, anxiety, self-confidence, language aptitude, learning strategies, field independence and achievement. The participants were students learning French. A collection of tests was administered including a short version of the MLAT along with *spelling clues, words in sentences and paired associates*. Then, the eight factors were examined to determine their effect, compare their validities and identify their contributions to L2 achievement. The findings showed significant correlations among six variables and objective measures set for the French language, excluding two variables; language strategies and field independence.

In this study, the aptitude variable showed stronger correlations with French achievement than the motivation and attitudes measures. However, the findings indicated that both the self-confidence and the anxiety measures obtained the highest correlations.

Similarly, Ehrman and Oxford (1995) investigated different variables to distinguish individual differences in a wide range of languages at the U.S. Department of State. The study involved 855 participants who took the aptitude tests (MLAT) together with questionnaires and other tests to identify features of motivation, anxiety, language learning strategies, learning styles, self-esteem and personality traits. They concluded that aptitude as a variable was a stronger predictor of achievement in speaking and reading while motivational factors and personality traits came at the next highest level in terms of correlation with achievement.

Given the above findings, the varying propensities of individual differences can play a significant role not only in predicting success but also in tailoring proper instructions and methodologies while enrolling students in different classes. Further, the above studies examined the combined effect of individual differences simultaneously not as discrete variables. Future research may then develop a comprehensive framework to account for the potential effect of these differences on learner language development, learning opportunities and the developmental processes of learning. Above all, it seems pertinent to remember that the role of teachers' practices is indispensable to be included within a comprehensive paradigm of variables affecting L2 learning.

B. Foreign Language Aptitude

Aptitude was considered by many SLA researchers to be the most consistent predictor of one's success in foreign language proficiency (Dörnyei, 2005; Ehrman, 1996; Harley & Hart, 1997; Skehan, 1986, 1989). It was defined by (Carroll, 1981, p. 86) as "an individual's initial state of readiness and capacity for learning a foreign language". Recently, FL aptitude was viewed as dynamic, including varying cognitive skills that were not necessarily stable since they could be altered through practice and refined throughout the years of learning (Biedron, 2015; Kormos, 2013; Singleton, 2017).

The study of Harley and Hart (1997) looked at whether language aptitude, differing learning types (analytical vs. holistic) and age affected students' success in the language classroom. The study showed that younger and older learners used different cognitive abilities to learn the target language. Younger students generally used their memory capacity to learn a language while older learners relied on their analytical ability to process language. Harley and Hart also took into consideration the different teaching styles implemented by instructors to address a classroom of younger learners (holistic) vs. a classroom of older learners (analytical).

The first result of this study revealed that younger and older learners exhibited different aptitudes and learning successes. Older learners scored higher on analytical tests and essays, while younger learners showed more aptitude for vocabulary and sentence repetition. The second result confirmed correlations between aptitude and success. Scores for older learners were correlated with vocabulary, cloze, and essays. In comparison, scores for younger learners were correlated with vocabulary, listening, and cloze scores. The third result emphasized the predictors for success which for younger learners was memory and for older learners was their ability to analyze the language.

What might be the implications of the above in teaching terms? The above study inspires teachers to take into account individual learners' strengths and abilities which could be based more on a learner's ability to memorize or analyze information. In addition, it indicates that early instruction for younger learners requires a more holistic approach than the type of instruction older learners receive. This study suggests to teachers that they need to understand that different processing abilities exist for our student population. Teachers, therefore, can appeal to different learning styles by introducing learners, especially older learners to a variety of learning strategies to help them acquire the language. Also, teachers can play to the natural strengths of the students. Teachers can tap into these strengths which may help keep learners motivated especially late starters who may become frustrated more easily than others.

Syllabus designers and material developers for language courses should also deem these learning styles as crucial components in both the academic and future careers of learners. Future research should look at the possibility of creating other genuine aptitude measures to assess the varying processing abilities of L2 learners outlined above.

SLA research on aptitude has long considered MLAT as an effective and valid measure for predicting language learning aptitude in foreign language proficiency (Carroll, 1981; Ehrman & Oxford 1995; Horwitz, 1987; Ranta, 2002; Sparks & Ganschow, 2001). However, these studies investigated FL aptitude in grammar-based and audiolingual contexts rather than communicative settings (Robinson, 2007; Linck et al., 2013). As a result, some other studies and in later years, some researchers who advocated the use of MLAT criticized it and called for updating the MLAT (Carroll, 1990; Ehrman, 1998; Ellis, 1986; Goodman et al., 1990; Sáfár & Kormos, 2008; Sparks et al., 2005). Other researchers asserted the inclusion of other measures and subcomponents of aptitude to predict language proficiency such as working memory which has been considered in recent SLA studies as effective as language aptitude in predicting language proficiency (Biedron, 2015; Li, 2013; Sparks et al., 2011; Wen, 2016; Wen et al., 2017).

There has also been an enduring flow of SLA research on developing more sensitive measures and constructs of FL aptitude such as induction, pragmatic and grammatical sensitivity and speaking proficiency (Linck et al., 2013; Safar & Kormos, 2008; VanPatten & Smith, 2015; VanPatten et al., 2013) and linking that, as Robinson (2007) suggested, to everyday classroom practices.

The study by VanPatten et al. (2013) carried out an experiment to test if grammatical sensitivity that was taught explicitly might enable L1 English speakers to modify their processing intake about input meaning-based and feedback. The study incorporated the processing instruction (PI) model to predict learners' capacity to understand sentences that go against the First Noun Principle (FNP) which states that the first noun or pronoun is interpreted as the subject or agent of the sentence. This experiment was operationalized in four different languages: Spanish, French, Russian, and German. In addition to completing the words in sentences section of the MLAT, a comprehension task comprised of a picture-matching task was designed to disrupt their processing behaviors. Learners were asked to listen to a sentence that may or may not conform to the (FNP) and then match it to a picture. The measure of "Trials to criterion" was used to assess the rate of acquisition which looked at the number of items it took for participants to start distinguishing between the two sentence types. The results unexpectedly revealed that MLAT scores did not correlate with the trial's criterion scores.

It is noteworthy to mention here that when acquisition was operationalized through rule-based input and the rules and knowledge were taught explicitly, the results revealed a stronger correlation between MLAT and FL proficiency. However, analyzing the results of the work by VanPatten et al. (2013) and later by VanPatten et al. (2015), in which acquisition was operationalized differently and participants were exposed to meaning-based input, the aptitude scores did not correlate with learners' performance. Similarly, Ellis (2004) stated that "language aptitude is implicated in L2 learning when learners are paying attention to form but not when they are focused exclusively on meaning" (p.532).

Although aptitude is to date considered a powerful tool in predicting language proficiency, more future research is undoubtedly needed to develop language aptitude measures that involve different processing and learning abilities, interactional and communicative aspects of the target language. Such language constructs should be able to speculate more closely on learners' linguistic and pragmatic abilities to perform in the target language.

C. L2 Motivation

As Dörnyei and Skehan (2003) explained, "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" (p. 614). According to Masgoret and Gardner (2003), motivated learners are willing to exert more effort, take responsibility for their learning, have goals to achieve, desires to fulfill, enjoy the process of learning and use whatever strategies available to succeed. A more comprehensive definition was formulated by Dörnyei and Ryan (2015) which looked at motivation as more dynamic in nature than being an affective construct and referred to it as "why, how long, how hard, how well, how proactively, and in what way the learner engaged in the learning process" (P. 6).

Speaking of motivation, the study by Noels et al. (1999) was one of the very few studies that investigated the effect of teachers' communicative practices along with feedback on L2 learning outcomes. The study also examined the relevance of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. The theoretical framework for this study was based on Deci and Ryan's (1985) Self-Determination Theory which defined intrinsic and extrinsic motivation and the three subtypes of extrinsic motivation which are external regulation, introjected regulation, and identified regulation. They also defined the concept of amotivation which arises when a learner has no motivation for learning a language. The scope of the theory, as stated by Ryan (2000), was "the investigation of people's inherent growth tendencies and innate psychological needs that are

the basis for their self-motivation and personality integration" (P. 68). The same theory was defined later by Ryan and Deci (2011) as "an empirically derived theory of human motivation and personality in social contexts that differentiates motivation in terms of being autonomous and controlled" (P. 416). The research questions of Noels et al. (1999) study were;

1. Is intrinsic and extrinsic motivation relevant for L2 learning?
2. Are students' perceptions of their teachers' communicative style (teachers' support of students' autonomy and feedback about students' learning progress) linked to intrinsic/extrinsic motivation? and
3. How does motivation relate to L2 outcomes, and the emotional variables of effort, and anxiety?

Results for RQ1 revealed that amotivation was correlated with greater anxiety in the language classroom, lower intensity of motivation, and less desire to continue to study the language. The less self-determined forms of motivation were not associated with either anxiety or motivational intensity, and students who were expecting to get an external reward were also inclined to continue to study the language. Students whose motives were based on more self-determined forms more were likely to experience less anxiety, showed greater motivation, and students who were labeled amotivated exhibited lower competence. Those students who were more intrinsically motivated had greater competence in the L2.

The results for RQ 2 showed that perceptions of the teachers were unrelated to the less self-determined forms of motivation or amotivation. Greater intrinsic motivation of learners was positively associated with perceiving the teacher as informative and negatively associated with perceiving the teacher as controlling. Perceptions of being controlled by the teacher were positively associated with amotivation. Less self-determined forms of motivation (external and introjected regulation) were irrelevant to the general perceptions of the teachers. Identified regulation and intrinsic motivation were positively associated with lower perceptions of being controlled. Perception of teachers as controlling and less informative was positively associated with higher perception of the environment being controlling. Perceptions of the teacher as controlling led to more anxiety among students, less motivation and desire to continue studying the language and lower competence self-assessment by the learner. Perceptions of related teacher feedback were interpreted as a sign to continue studying the language by highly motivated learners.

Regarding the RQ3, measuring variables such as teachers' communicative approach and feedback with different types of motivation, the results showed that these variables could influence students' motivation to continue learning the L2 and the extent to which learners would achieve success while studying the language.

The first teaching implication that this study may suggest is that a student should not be classified by teachers' own definitions of motivation. If teachers base the way motivation is defined on the Self-Determination Theory, it would be difficult then to explain the fluctuation of motivation at different times during a semester. Moreover, due to a variety of affective factors (school deadlines, family, or peers) students may move from one subtype to another more easily than teachers realize. It could be more plausible, as Gardner (2010) suggested that it is the intensity of motivation rather than the type of motivation that could serve the learner for better and more successful L2 learning.

What else can teachers do to influence the linguistic and nonlinguistic outcomes of their students? They can encourage students to value goals for learning, particularly the goal of self-development and enjoyment in learning (Noels, 2001). In addition, they can support student autonomy and competence, which in turn contributes to better learning. Further, perceptions of the teacher's communicative style are related to intrinsic motivation; the more controlling and the less informative students perceived the teacher to be, the lower students' intrinsic motivation was.

Motivation is one area where future research can immensely influence the learners' successful acquisition of L2. In doing so, future research should develop a thorough understanding and examination of the patterns of interaction between teachers and learners along with considering the varying aspects of the classroom environment,

The study of Dornyei and Kormos (2000) investigated emotional, motivational, and social variables and how such variables were interrelated with students' competence during oral tasks. The study distributed the same oral task in L1 and L2 and measured the learners' output in terms of the number of words and turn-taking. The results of this study showed that students were more motivated and engaged when they were asked to perform the task in their first language than that in the L2 (English). Further, attitude towards L2 and the tasks students were asked to perform impacted their level of engagement.

The teaching implication of this study is that teachers should recognize how the target language is perceived by the student population. Typically, most learners cannot choose the language medium they are to study, especially if it is in a situation where the lingua franca is being forced upon them. Teachers may find themselves in a difficult situation and they may not have enough freedom to choose their syllabuses. It is important within these situations for teachers to choose approaches and methods that are sensitive to the needs of the students and act accordingly. The second implication of this study is that curriculum designers should keep learners' motivation and attitude toward performing certain tasks in mind as they adopt, adapt, and create communicative tasks for their students.

Future research might consider the development of new measures to account for the learners' attitudes and learning motives in general and that of their L2 system. Such measures may reduce cross-cultural differences that may arise as a result of learners prioritizing motives in learning between L1 and L2.

A considerable body of SLA studies also explored the relationship between motivation and other language learning-related variables, such as proficiency, learning strategy use, preference for instructional activities and personal goals.

Schmidt et al. (1996) created a total of 100 items in a questionnaire to measure students' motivation about both preference for instructional activities and learning strategies. The data were collected from 1554 adult learners attending EFL courses at the American University in Egypt. The construct of motivation in their study was related to gender, age, personal preference for learning tasks and language proficiency being the most important. The results revealed a three-dimensional model that may account for 85% of the variance of motivation, namely, a model comprising effect (intrinsic motivation), goal orientation (extrinsic motivation), and expectancy (positive thinking). The results also revealed that learners who scored higher on the affective dimensional model showed a higher preference for the communicative mode of teaching while those who were more anxious showed no preference for group work configurations.

Nevertheless, perceptions of motivation, its types and varying levels of intensity for learning in the EFL context should presumably be different from that manifested in an SLA context. For one thing, learners have limited exposure to the target language which is often experienced in class. Further, the above study discussed teachers' communicative styles as affecting learners' preference for learning tasks. However, teachers at the American University in Cairo have been mainly native speakers or native-like speakers of English and that could be a potential factor for such an increase in motivational preference. In addition, the construct of motivation was originally related to gender, age, and language proficiency but not to teachers' practices in class.

The implication to be considered is that EFL learners of L2, regardless of the type of motivation, can be encouraged to exhibit more responsibility for their learning and have, therefore, better rates of success and achievement in L2 attainment.

Oxford and Nyikos (1989) found that motivation was the most significant aspect influencing strategy use. They concluded that highly motivated learners used several strategies more frequently than low-motivated learners. Similarly, Lan and Oxford (2003) examined the degree of liking English of 379 elementary school children in Taiwan. As an indicator of motivation, the degree to which learners like English strongly affected the choice and use of learning strategies.

Although the correlation between motivation and the use of learning strategies is evident, but more with highly motivated learners. Perhaps, a pedagogical implication that may benefit both low-motivated and proficient learners could be operationalized through training these learners on how to consciously use such strategies. This training will not only benefit learners in language acquisition but will motivate them to learn, particularly if they see the immediate effect of such training on their developmental processes of L2. For instance, learners will value the use of fillers and discourse markers when they realize that they help them avoid communication breakdowns.

Recent studies in SLA have proposed several motivational models in an attempt to address the complex dynamic nature of motivation in language learning such as the Motivational Self System (L2MSS) (Dörnyei, 2005, 2009), and Directed Motivational Currents (DMCs) (Muir & Dörnyei, 2013; Dörnyei et al., 2014; Dörnyei et al., 2015). The Directed Motivational Currents (DMCs), in particular, is a unique model in that it integrates several current theoretical aspects with a clearer vision. It was best described by Dörnyei et al. (2015) as;

“a potent motivational surge that emerges from the alignment of a number of personal, temporal and contextual factors/parameters, creating momentum to pursue an individually defined future goal/vision that is personally significant and emotionally satisfying” (p.103).

Dörnyei et al. (2015) conducted an experimental study investigating the maintained motivation behavior of second language learners of Swedish. They interviewed these learners who were immigrants learning Swedish to examine if the central characteristics of DMCs could be found in the subjects' descriptions of their sustained motivated behavior experiences. The findings revealed that the motivated behavior described by the participants carried features similar to those of the DMCs which were described by Henry et al. (2015) as, “the presence of a salient facilitative structure, the generation of positive emotionality, and the direction of motivated behavior towards long-term identity–investment goals” (p.2).

The above study can update both teachers and researchers on the valuable role of DMCs and their effective learning and teaching process within which motivation in language learning can be sustained over a long period. Such motivational model could help teachers understand students' interests and provide them with interactional tasks to raise their sense of functioning even beyond what they think they are capable of. However, this model of the sustained motivational and goal-directed process is a novel trend and it requires further investigations and experimental studies to decide on the practices in which the usefulness and potential of DMCs can optimally be harnessed. Further, such future studies should decide on the effect of these practices on positive educational outcomes.

D. Aptitude and Motivation in Language Learning

Aptitude and Motivation have received more attention in SLA research than other individual differences such as age, gender, and personality traits (Dörnyei & Skehan, 2003; Dörnyei, 2010; Dörnyei et al., 2015; Ehrman, 1996; Ellis, 2004; Kiss & Nikolov, 2005; Skehan, 1998; Sparks et al., 2009, 2011). Yet, both factors were rarely measured together to explain variance in FL proficiency. Nonetheless, as Gardner's socio-educational model (1985, 2010) proposed, both variables could be in contact with each other and contribute to language achievement.

More recently, Kiss and Nikolov (2005) developed a Hungarian version of the Modern Language Aptitude Test (MLAT) and devised it to measure young learners' aptitude. They also conducted a motivation questionnaire of 20

items operationalized via a Likert scale along with particular English proficiency tests to evaluate language skills (listening, reading and writing). The results showed a significant correlation between aptitude and English proficiency ($r=.634$). The effects of aptitude and proficiency on the acquisition of EFL in young learners were more substantial than that of aptitude when correlated with motivation. One clear conclusion was that aptitude was responsible for over 20% of the variation in English performance while motivation accounted for only 8%.

Sparks et al. (2009) followed up with participants in their study from grade 1 to grade 10. However, they run the MLAT and the motivation questionnaire in grade 9. They used L2 decoding and spelling tests in addition to the MLAT. The findings revealed that aptitude alone accounted for an overall proficiency of (44% of the variance). Further, aptitude when combined with decoding and spelling tests explained almost (56%) of the variance. Sparks et al. concluded that cognitive factors such as L1 skills, L1 academic aptitude, L2 aptitude with decoding and spelling tests and noncognitive factors such as motivation and anxiety altogether accounted for a significant percentage of variance (66%).

Hence, aptitude and motivation are two strong predictors of achievement in the FL settings. However, there have been much of advancing shifts in the conceptualization of motivation in L2 learning starting from Gardner's classical Instrument/integrative model of motivation (1985), to Dörnyei's (2001) process motivation model, to L2 self and dynamic theory system (DST) model (Dörnyei 2010; Dörnyei et al., 2015) and the latest theory of directed motivational currents (DMCs) (Dörnyei et al., 2016). On the other hand, FL aptitude has not received the same theoretical treatment (Skehan, 2002) as the case with motivation except for some development of subtests and variations of the MLAT into CANAL-F (Grigorenko et al., 2000) to LLAMA (Meara, 2005) and Hi-LAB (Doughty et al., 2010; Linck et al., 2013). One reason that could explain such discrepancy between these two individual differences is that SLA literature seems to be consistent in experimentally finding aptitude a much more significant predictor of language achievement than that of motivation (Ehrman & Oxford, 1995; Skehan, 1989; Ehrman, 1998; Dörnyei, 2005; Kiss & Nikolov, 2005; Suárez & Muñoz, 2011). Thus, SLA researchers might have found it more appealing to delve into deeper theoretical conceptualizations of the underlying complexity of motivation as an affective factor that consistently fluctuates based on many other affective factors.

Although motivation and aptitude are consistent predictors of L2 attainment and the most responsible factors that explain variance in learners' performance, it is also reasonable to suggest that other variables related to both teachers' and learners' behaviors in class, if considered, would represent the whole picture of L2 achievement. Future research should include sophisticated and novel tools to better display a more comprehensive approach in the conceptualization of teachers' practices and learners' individual differences as interrelated variables contributing to successful language achievement.

III. DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

SLA studies have been predominantly focusing on the learners' potentials and motives with less attention on teachers' classroom practices and their impact on L2 development. The topics of teachers' practices and their impact on learners' motivation and aptitude are crucial for successful language learning and need to be considered especially in the EFL settings. Individual differences should further be approached differently in the EFL context which differs from the ESL context in many ways (e.g., limited exposure to L2, large classes, varying proficiency levels, etc.).

Hence, in such EFL teaching and learning scenarios, it could be teachers' practices that do matter towards the noticeable and progressive achievement of L2 more than other variables extensively examined in the SLA studies. Such teaching practices could support and nurture different types of motivation and language abilities in EFL learners. EFL teachers in many third-world countries can understand and appreciate such an impact on learners even if it has not been empirically approved so far in the SLA literature. For them motivating learners and supporting their language abilities could be the only strategy that could stand in the face of all obstacles experienced by them and their learners alike. Future studies in SLA should, therefore, involve EFL/ESL teachers' strategies and effective methods in the paradigm of factors affecting successful L2 learning.

This paper has provided implications for SLA researchers based on the discussions of the findings of some influential studies on aptitude and motivation in SLA. The core theme is to include the impact of teachers' practices when investigating the impact of learners' aptitude and motivation on L2 achievement.

EFL/ESL teachers should consider that their learners are in great need of their support and appreciation of their existing language skills and motivations.

The following are classroom practices that are suggested to keep students motivated and enable them to fully exhibit their language abilities with the hope of achieving better success rate in L2. Such practices are not exclusive and language educators are encouraged to add more novel suggestions.

1. Keeping language classes student-centered.
2. Displaying a strong interest in students' existing knowledge and abilities.
3. Allowing students be part of the learning and teaching processes.
4. Inspiring them not only in the subject matter but also help bring out their creative side and accomplish the extraordinary.
5. Tailoring instructions with respect to the students' needs, language abilities, concerns and prior knowledge.

6. Undertaking tasks where students can see the immediate results of their efforts.
7. Designing projects that are properly challenging and in view of their experience and aptitude.
8. Testing what they have understood and gained and not what they have not mastered.
9. Looking for ways to stimulate improvement and progress.
10. Appreciating positive things first, and then tactfully moving on to what needs to be enhanced.
11. Providing students with more control and responsibility over how they show their understanding.
12. Encouraging students to value goals for learning including self-developments and enjoining their learning experiences.
13. Using technologies whenever possible for learning purposes (e.g., social media, WhatsApp groups, etc.)
14. Using explicit instruction and well-scaffolded opportunities to practice and apply what students have learnt.
15. Incorporating collaborative learning opportunities to encourage students to question, explain, and express their thoughts.

IV. CONCLUSION

Researching the SLA field, it seems that no matter what experiments are being carried out on factors affecting L2 acquisition, there are always gaps that require further studies. Measuring the efficacy of teachers' practices via qualitative methods such as interviews and observations would notably balance the learning teaching equation and lessen defects that could spur from too much dependence on statistical analyses or addressing individual differences while neglecting others. Perhaps a hybrid paradigm including quantitative and qualitative measures of individual differences (Spolsky, 2000) including teachers' practices in class, as suggested in this paper, would generate better indications of successful language achievement of L2

To conclude, a cumulative approach focusing on the interrelatedness of the processes of teaching practices, aptitude, motivation and successful L2 acquisition should be the theme of future research. This approach could be operationalized in taking actions and developing measures to assess the efficacy of teachers' practices and the influence of such practices on sustaining and supporting students' motivation, language aptitude and long-term language proficiency. Results could also be used to identify areas for teachers' professional growth and connect learners with targeted long-term achievement.

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Sami Al-wossabi is an associate professor of Applied Linguistics at the English Language Institute, Jazan University, Saudi Arabia. He has written articles on different research topics. His main areas of interest include curriculum development, communicative language teaching (CLT), computer-assisted language learning (CALL) and second language acquisition (SLA).