

The Relationship between Learners' Affective Variables and Second Language Achievement

Fakieh Alrabai

Faculty of Arts,
King Khalid University, Saudi Arabia

Christo Moskovsky

School of Humanities & Social Science,
The University of Newcastle, Australia

Abstract

This study examines five affective variables: *motivation*, *attitudes*, *anxiety*, *self-esteem* and *autonomy*, with the aim of establishing their effect, together and individually, on learners' L2 achievement. Data were collected from Saudi university students learning English as a second/foreign language as part of their degree. Data collection was conducted, via a questionnaire and a language test, in two waves – approximately three months apart ($N=274$ at Time 1, and $N=252$ at Time 2). Descriptive and inferential analyses of the data confirmed the importance of *affect* in relation to L2 acquisition: the five affective variables together accounted for between 85% and 91% of the L2 performance variance in our sample. Individually, each of the five variables was found to make a unique contribution to L2 performance, but among them motivation emerged as by far the strongest predictor of L2 achievement; by comparison the effects of the other four on achievement can be described as marginal. This outcome constitutes compelling evidence of the critical role that motivation plays with respect to L2 acquisition generally and achievement more specifically. The study's findings hold a range of potentially important implications for L2 learning and teaching practices. In light of these findings, EFL teachers are in a strong position to influence the operation of the affective factors by consolidating learners' autonomy and self-esteem, reducing anxiety, promoting positive attitudes and enhancing learners' motivation.

Key terms: affect, motivation, attitudes, anxiety, self-esteem, autonomy, EFL teaching/learning

Cite as: Alrabai,F.,& Moskovsky, C. (2016). The Relationship between Learners' Affective Variables and Second Language Achievement. *Arab World English Journal*,7 (2). DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol7no2.6>