Affect in Language Learning

Edited by
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This book is dedicated to Earl Stevick. For many foreign and second language professionals, much of our information about language teaching has come to us from his work. But, more importantly, our attitude towards language teaching, our relationship with the people in our classrooms and our vision of what we would like to achieve as language teachers have all been influenced by his thinking. And I stress the word *thinking* – deep, experience-based thinking – because in Earl Stevick's writing what predominates is not the little statistic, although it may also be there to inform us, but the big idea to inspire us. In his dialogue with the reader, we find ourselves in the presence of a philosopher and a master storyteller, as well as a great language teacher and teacher trainer. For many of us Earl Stevick's work has been not only a significant factor in the origin of our interest in the affective aspects of language learning and teaching but also a continuing source of wisdom for our minds and our hearts as we strive to develop our students' second language abilities and their potential as human beings. It has touched and enriched our lives.

Jane Arnold, Seville, 1999

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Preface

> The term 'feeling' is a synonym for emotion, although with a broader range. In the older psychological literature the term 'affect' was used. It is still used to imply an even wider range of phenomena that have anything to do with emotions, moods, dispositions, and preferences.
> (Oatley and Jenkins 1996:124)

As an English teacher in Singapore, Bob is concerned with creating materials that are of relevance to his students' lives in order to increase the motivational effectiveness of his classes and to develop his learners' potential on both linguistic and personal levels. Janice, a textbook writer and teacher in the UK, feels it is important to communicate positive messages in the classroom to enhance students' self-esteem since their beliefs about their abilities strongly influence their performance. In his intermediate-level English classes in Argentina, Vicente considers very carefully his treatment of errors in order to maintain a relaxed atmosphere in which his students are not afraid to speak. Meg, a researcher in the USA, has found that personality factors are closely related to how language learners' feelings affect their learning behaviours. As she trains ESL teachers in Australia, Donna encourages them to expand their awareness of the person behind whatever method they use in the classroom. Working in very different contexts, all of these educators are involved with affect in language learning.

When dealing with a topic as varied as the affective aspects of second and foreign language learning, we can recall the well-known fable of the blind men who come across an elephant. One touches a leg and says, 'Ah, ha. An elephant is like a column'. Another touches the trunk and says, 'No. An elephant is like a thick rope'. A third, touching a large, rough ear, says, 'Oh, that can't be. An elephant is like a carpet'. Each, touching only one part, conceived of the whole in a very different way. None was entirely wrong in his perception, and yet none really understood what an elephant was.

Likewise, the affective domain in language learning can be ap-

proached from several quite different but not mutually exclusive perspectives, such as the mainly theoretical, the empirical, the humanistic or the experiential. This book aims to bring together some of the many varied facets of the whole picture for the reader. Both novice and experienced second and foreign language teaching professionals can find much in *Affect in Language Learning* to guide their classroom practice. Similarly, those involved in the planning of language courses, materials developers and students of applied linguistics can benefit from a greater knowledge of the role of affect in language learning.

Specialists in language teaching often do not agree about the relative importance of theory and practice. Writing of educators in general, Howard Gardner, Harvard professor and creator of the influential theory of multiple intelligences, notes that 'theorists wish that their methods could be instantly transferred to the untidy and unpredictable classroom, while practitioners search for the generative power of an appropriate theoretical base for their techniques' (Gardner 1993:120). In this book the place of both theory and practice is recognized since neither should be ignored when dealing with language learning. Thus, a basic theoretical introduction to each topic is generally provided, and then some practical applications for the foreign and second language classroom are included.

The authors in this volume are not proposing that attention to affect will provide the solution to all learning problems or that we can now be less concerned with the cognitive aspects of the learning process, but rather that it can be very beneficial for language teachers to choose to focus at times on affective questions. Countering allegations that these matters are not part of teachers' obligations, Underhill (1989:252) points out that 'teachers who claim it is not their job to take these phenomena into account may miss out on some of the most essential ingredients in the management of successful learning'. Indeed, from one point of view we are abdicating our responsibility if we do not address these questions. Bruner (1996) reminds us that if our educational institutions do not deal with values and affective issues, such as self-esteem, which are the basis for healthy value systems, learners will turn to a myriad of 'anti-schools' that will certainly provide them with models – though very probably not the most socially desirable ones.

Affective language learning fits within what appears to be an emerging paradigm that stretches far beyond language teaching. There is evidence from a wide variety of fields which indicates that attention to affect-related concepts is playing a very important role in the solution to many types of problems and in the attainment of a more fulfilling way of life. British law enforcement officers are making use of contributions from Neuro-Linguistic Programming to be more 'affectively' sensitive.

Olympic ski teams and other sports participants incorporate visualization techniques as a regular part of their training to put themselves into optimal affective states. Stress management programmes are blossoming in business centres all over the world. British architect Norman Foster is known for designing buildings which, while using the most advanced technology, are especially adapted to transmit feelings of tranquillity and well-being to the people who will use them. Violinist Yehudi Menuhin, working with MUS-E International, a multicultural educational project, has pointed out that education today is directed towards training learners' thinking rather than their emotions. He stresses that there is a need to create a voice to give a vehicle for emotion and calls for a change in the present educational system (Fancelli and Vidal-Folch 1997). Fritjof Capra (1982) has documented further signs of this paradigm shift in areas such as physics, medicine, psychology and economics.

In very diverse areas of experience there is a growing concern for humanistic approaches and for the affective side of life. Perhaps the common ground upon which all rest – both in language learning and the greater whole of society – is a desire to contribute to the growth of human potential.

In this book *diversity* is indeed a key word. Diversity in the areas of learning experience covered. Diversity in the backgrounds of the contributors – geographic diversity (from Europe to North and South America and Asia) and professional diversity with contributors involved in foreign or second language research, teaching and teacher training in state and private educational facilities, on primary, secondary and tertiary levels. Yet within this variety there is a communality among the authors, a sense of unity in the commitment to a type of teaching that makes the book in a very real sense the product of a gathering of friends.

After the first chapter, in which Jane Arnold and H. Douglas Brown present an overview of affective factors related to language learning, our incursions into the domain of affect are within three main spaces. The first deals with aspects located within the learner, such as memory or personality traits, the second is mainly in the realm of the teacher, and the third brings us to the interactional space, where the resources at our disposal are put to use. However, these 'spaces' are, of course, not elements which can be topographically circumscribed. The chapters within them are rather like dunes in the desert which shift positions around a few permanent oases that serve as orientation. In the concluding chapter, Joy Reid takes a brief look at several general issues, including learning styles, an area that has been touched on in several parts of this volume, and points to directions for future research.

Preface

After each of the three main parts there is a list of questions and tasks. This is offered as a way to bring the reader into dialogue with the authors, either through individual reading or in classroom group discussion. Hopefully, additional questions will be raised and will lead researchers to illuminate new areas of affective language learning.

With whatever I have done to prepare *Affect in Language Learning* – thinking, planning, writing, editing, revising – work and pleasure have, at every moment, been indistinguishable, indeed a perfect example of flow. At different stages in the maturation of the volume, I have been fortunate to have received a good deal of assistance. In the Mesón del Moro in Seville, in what were once Moorish baths, working lunches, first with Mario Rinvolucri and later with Doug Brown, provided the occasion to reflect on the direction the volume was to take and to clarify aspects of its development. Grethe Hooper Hansen injected enthusiasm and vision into the project when she was in Seville in 1995 for a conference on Humanistic Language Teaching. At the same conference I had the undeniable pleasure of spending many hours throughout the week conversing with Earl Stevick about the book and language teaching and learning in general. All four have provided invaluable continued support. Both at the 1997 TESOL Convention in Orlando and later, Madeline Ehrman offered many useful suggestions. My colleagues in the English Language Department at the University of Seville have also helped in several ways; a special thanks to Mary O'Sullivan. My gratitude also goes to Tim Murphey and Leo van Lier for their helpful ideas and to Tammi Santana and Jo Bruton for proofreading. Financial support for aspects of the preparation of the book was made available by the Junta de Andalucía.

Alison Sharpe at Cambridge University Press provided encouragement from the very beginning. Had it not been for that, this book might have been just another good idea which never got off the ground. Mickey Bonin's editorial assistance in the later stages and comments on the manuscript from the reviewers were most appreciated.

Facing the beginning of the third millennium, all evidence points to the fallacy of Pangloss' advice to Candide; this certainly does not seem to be the best of all possible worlds. Thus, change is advisable, though not easy. Margaret Mead said, 'Small groups of thoughtful concerned citizens can change the world. Indeed it is the only thing that ever has'.

It is my hope that this book, written by a number of thoughtful, concerned authors, may contribute to the process of change by reaching out to a special group of people – the worldwide language teaching community.

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1   A map of the terrain

Jane Arnold and H. Douglas Brown

Introduction

The term *affect* has to do with aspects of our emotional being; however, as Fehr and Russell (1984:464) have noted, 'Everyone knows what an emotion is, until asked to give a definition'. Damasio (1994:145) makes a distinction between the terms *emotions* (changes in body state in response to a positive or negative situation) and *feelings* (perceptions of these changes). Besnier (1990:421) refers to further categorization but brings up reservations from the anthropological point of view about cross-cultural validity of distinctions. In the present context, affect will be considered broadly as aspects of emotion, feeling, mood or attitude which condition behaviour. In this chapter we will be looking at a wide spectrum of affect-related factors which influence language learning.

   It should be noted that the affective side of learning is not in opposition to the cognitive side. When both are used together, the learning process can be constructed on a firmer foundation. Neither the cognitive nor the affective has the last word, and, indeed, neither can be separated from the other. Damasio has shown how evidence indicates that even on the neurobiological level, emotions are a part of reason and, as he demonstrates, fortunately so. In years of clinical and experimental work he has been able to observe how the absence of emotion compromises our rational capacity. He affirms that 'certain aspects of the process of emotion and feeling are indispensable for rationality' (Damasio 1994:xiii). Neural scientist LeDoux sees emotion and cognition as partners in the mind. He notes how, after years of behaviourist dominance, cognitive science once again made it respectable to study mental states; and he insists that now it is time 'to reunite cognition and emotion in the mind' (1996:39). LeDoux goes so far as to say that 'minds without emotions are not really minds at all' (1996:25). Although psychologists have traditionally considered emotion to be the Cinderella of mental functions, today a reversal of this trend is evident. Oatley and Jenkins (1996:122) affirm that 'emotions are not extras.

They are the very center of human mental life ... [They] link what is important for us to the world of people, things, and happenings'. And there is a growing body of evidence that points to the significance of our emotions in maintaining our physical well-being; Goleman (1997:34) presents research which indicates that 'the afflictive emotions tend to make one ill and wholesome states of mind tend to promote health'.

A broad understanding of affect in language learning is important for at least two reasons. First, attention to affective aspects can lead to more effective language learning. When dealing with the affective side of language learners, attention needs to be given both to how we can overcome problems created by negative emotions and to how we can create and use more positive, facilitative emotions.

In the presence of overly negative emotions such as anxiety, fear, stress, anger or depression, our optimal learning potential may be compromised. The most innovative techniques and the most attractive materials may be rendered inadequate, if not useless, by negative affective reactions involved with the language learning process. Anxiety, for example, can wreak havoc with the neurological conditions in the prefrontal lobe of the brain, preventing memory from operating properly and thus greatly reducing learning capacity (see Stevick this volume). Fortunately, language teachers are becoming increasingly aware of the importance of negative emotional factors and of ways to handle them.

Looking at the other side of the question, stimulating the different positive emotional factors, such as self-esteem, empathy or motivation, can greatly facilitate the language learning process. A moment's reflection, however, leads us to the conclusion that in many situations much more attention is given to the question of negative emotions. For example, Damasio (1994) identifies five major emotions, under which others are subsumed: happiness, sadness, anger, fear, disgust. Goleman (1995) also groups the emotions in basic families: anger, sadness, fear, enjoyment, love, surprise, disgust and shame. In these and other classifications, the majority of the emotions would generally be seen as negative. While striving to resolve the at least numerically more predominant negative emotions, one should not lose sight of the importance of developing the positive. Motivation, after all, is better guided by a move towards pleasure and what Csikszentmihalyi (1990) calls *flow* than by a move away from pain. Even Skinner (1957) claimed consistently more efficient long-term retention under conditions of positive reinforcement than avoidance of aversive stimuli.

A second reason for focusing attention on affect in the language classroom reaches beyond language teaching and even beyond what has traditionally been considered the academic realm. Daniel Goleman

(1995) has convincingly presented his case for an 'expanded mandate' for all educational institutions. He points out that, especially since the eighteenth century, in Western civilization we have concentrated on understanding the rational, cognitive functions of our mind, while misusing or denying whatever falls within the realm of the emotions or the non-rational. One of the consequences of this situation is our current 'emotional illiteracy'. 'These are times,' Goleman states, 'when the fabric of society seems to unravel at ever-greater speed, when selfishness, violence, and a meanness of spirit seem to be rotting the goodness of our communal lives ... There is growing evidence that fundamental ethical stances in life stem from underlying emotional capabilities' (xii). He puts forth as a solution 'a new vision of what schools can do to educate the whole student, bringing together mind and heart in the classroom' (xiv) and shows how many educational programmes are already dealing very successfully with the emotional mind.

This expanded mandate can be fulfilled in all subjects across the curriculum, and foreign and second language learning is no exception. In a language classroom which focuses on meaningful interaction, there is certainly room for dealing with affect. Ehrman (1998: 102) states that 'it has become increasingly evident that the purpose of classroom learning is not only to convey content information'. In this context, Stevick (1998:166) speaks of bringing to language teaching a concern for 'deeper aims', for 'pursuing new "life goals", not just for reaching certain "language goals"'. As we teach the language, we can also educate learners to live more satisfying lives and to be responsible members of society. To do this, we need to be concerned with both their cognitive and affective natures and needs.

The relationship between affect and language learning, then, is a bidirectional one. Attention to affect can improve language teaching and learning, but the language classroom can, in turn, contribute in a very significant way to educating learners affectively. Ideally, we keep both directions in mind.

Language teaching reaching out

Just as language teaching has become increasingly open to information from vital feeder fields (for example, psychology, psycholinguistics, sociolinguistics, education and neuroscience), in the same way we have been witnessing in recent years a broadening of aims for the foreign and second language classroom. When pointing out the advantages of teaching thinking skills in the language classroom, Chamot also stresses

the importance of collaborative learning. She notes that collaborative language work helps to develop Gardner's interpersonal intelligence, which 'is characterized by the ability to understand and respond effectively to others' (1995:4). This is definitely a step in the direction of emotional literacy. Freudenstein (1992) has argued that in our increasingly aggressive world, teaching peace has a vital role in the language classroom. *Idiom*, published by NYSTESOL, devoted an entire issue (1993–94) to peace and environmental education, and *English Teaching Forum*'s October 1993 issue was dedicated to 'Environment and ESL'.

Along with this diversification of objectives for the language classroom has come a new view of the language teacher. From the point of view of affective language learning, *being* is just as important as *doing*; a good language teacher *knows* and *does* but most essentially *is*. This does not mean that language teachers no longer need, for example, a firm command of the language being taught or proper training in language teaching methodology. It means that these skills will be much more effective if teachers are also concerned with their own emotional intelligence, as this can make a great deal of difference in the language learning process from the point of view of the learner.

Drawing on Sartre (1956), van Lier (personal communication) comments that in teacher training he finds it useful to set teacher development within a broad spectrum of experience. (See Figure 1.) *Having* relates to the knowledge (of subject matter and pedagogy, of self and others) and resources teachers have available, *Doing* to their skills and their abilities to construct learning opportunities, and *Being* to their personal qualities, their vision, and their sense of mission.
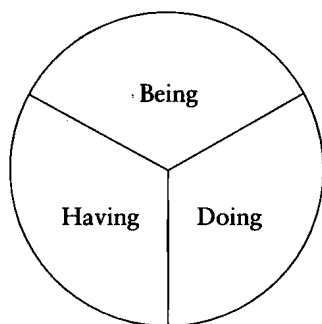

Figure 1   Areas for teacher development

Millett points out that when teachers focus on their students' learning, they 'begin to see that if they want to improve their teaching and become more aware of the learning, eventually they have to work on themselves'

(interviewed in Johnson 1997:20). Thus, as part of their professional training, teachers can benefit from working on their personal development. As they come to know themselves better, they will also be able to understand their students better and lead them towards more significant learning and growth. As Griggs (1996:232) puts it, 'this awareness [of self] and belief in human potential is a transformative power in itself. It lays a firm basis for learning and working effectively and connecting deeply with the self as well as with others'.

The influence of affect in educational contexts

Interest in affective factors in education is not new. Already implicit in the writing of Dewey, Montessori and Vygotsky in the first part of this century, it gained importance with the growth of humanistic psychology in the 1960s (see Maslow 1968; Rogers 1969). Not unlike Goleman today, Rogers was pessimistic about mainstream educational institutions: 'They have focused so intently on the cognitive and have limited themselves so completely to "educating from the neck up", that this narrowness is resulting in serious social consequences' (Rogers 1975:40–41). Among the most notable applications of humanistic psychology to education was the Confluent Education movement, whose theorists, such as George Isaac Brown (1971) and Gloria Castillo (1973), stressed the need to unite the cognitive and affective domains in order to educate the whole person. With related aims, the Human Potential Research Project was founded by John Heron at the University of Surrey in 1970.

In the late 1970s and 1980s foreign and second language teacher trainers and writers expressed similar concerns. Stevick, Rinvolucri, Moskowitz, Galyean, among other representatives of Humanistic Language Teaching, were searching for ways to enrich language learning by incorporating aspects of the affective dimension of the learner. It has been stressed, however, that humanistic language teaching does not propose to replace teaching the second language by other activities, but rather to add to the effective language teaching going on in the classroom, where information and formation can co-exist (Arnold 1998).

Many of the major developments in language teaching during the past twenty-five years are in some way related to the need to acknowledge affect in language learning. The methods coming to the fore in the 1970s – Suggestopedia, Silent Way, Community Language Learning, Total Physical Response – take into account the affective side of language learning in a very central manner. (Description and evaluation of these methods can be found in Asher 1977; Curran 1976; Gattegno

1972; Larsen-Freeman 1986; Lozanov 1979; Richards and Rodgers 1986; and Stevick 1976, 1980, 1990, 1996, 1998.)

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) has had pervasive influence on language teaching in all its phases (syllabus design, materials, teaching techniques . . .), and it too gives affect its due. CLT emerged in the late 70s as a reaction to structuralism and to methods such as the audiolingual which neglected important affective aspects of learning and which were not successful in teaching learners to communicate. 'Communicative Language Teaching appealed to those who sought a more humanistic approach to teaching, one in which the interactive process of communication received priority' (Richards and Rodgers 1986:83). Unfortunately, in some cases, CLT has been reduced to the implementation of certain types of activities, without engaging learners in real communication (see Rinvolucri this volume).

The Natural Approach, developed by Krashen and Terrell (1983), takes affect into consideration in a prominent way. One of the five hypotheses in Krashen's theory of second language acquisition is the affective filter, and Natural Approach classroom activities are designed to minimize stress.

Curriculum design in recent years has also been influenced by humanistic-affective currents of thought. In the past many experts on language teaching have tended to emphasize the language over the teaching, the *what* over the *how*; and theoretical linguistics has often occupied space that might more appropriately be given to insights from the field of education, for example. Van Lier (1994:341) states clearly: 'I would like to see the field of SLA anchored in education'. As a way to cure the 'classic schizophrenia' of an understanding of SLA which moves back and forth between education and linguistics, he has proposed the development of both domains through what he and others have called 'educational linguistics'. Current researchers in the area of curriculum design have developed undeniably humanistic learner-centred models (Nunan 1988; Tudor 1997), which show the necessity of focusing more on language learners and their experience rather than simply on the narrower field of non-learner related linguistic corpora.

Indications that learners themselves would welcome a greater focus on humanistic content in language classes are not lacking. A study of reading topic preferences among advanced level students of English in Spain showed that from a broad selection of reading texts, including the main types found in most EFL/ESL textbooks, those most highly ranked related to personal development (Avila 1997). Similarly, Moskowitz (this volume) has documented the favourable response of foreign language students to humanistic language activities.

A learner-centred language curriculum takes affect into account in