

Individual Differences in Second Language Learning

Purpose

The purpose of this assignment is to provide you an opportunity to demonstrate your understanding of the importance of individual differences in second language learning. It sensitizes you to the dimensions and aspects of this variable and the latest research findings. It is hoped that you will be able to apply your obtained understanding to your own language learning and/or teaching practice.

Requirements

You are given several ESL learner profiles on the following page. Read them carefully and write a 1,200-word paper relating these profiles to the course readings. You must include the following components in your paper:

Importance of IDs. Elaborate on the importance of individual differences in second language learning and summarize the research findings discussed in class readings and lectures. Aspects and dimensions to be considered might include, but not limited to, age, aptitude (including working memory), learning styles, learning strategies, motivation, personality, and anxiety.

IDs represented in the provided learner profiles. Show how what you have outlined regarding the various dimensions or variables are reflected in the provided profiles, and state how the personal traits might affect their learning outcome. You should address all relevant individual difference variables represented in the profile.

Implications for teaching. Briefly discuss the implications for classroom teaching by referring to the four learners. In other words, what language instructors should do to address individual differences in their teaching?

The recommended weights of the three components should be 30% for the importance of IDs, 50% for how IDs are reflected in the provided profiles, and 20% for pedagogical implications.

Presentation

Once you have completed your assignment, proofread it. Include a list of references and a word count at end. Make sure the references are complete and are correctly formatted. You must follow the APA style in formatting in-text citations and reference lists. Go to this link for related information:

<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/>; on the menu bar on the left, click on “In-Text Citations: The Basics” and “Reference List: Basic Rules” as well as other links that you find useful.

Assessment

The paper is evaluated based on the extent to which

1. all three required components are included;
2. it demonstrates your understanding of concepts;
3. literature and class materials are appropriately referenced and integrated;
4. ideas are presented clearly, logically, and accurately;
5. the APA guidelines are followed in formatting and a word count is provided.

Submission

This assignment accounts for **25%** of your final grade. The paper is due by **4:00 PM, Monday, August 25** on level 3 of Arts 1 Building. Attach a cover sheet to your assignment. Information regarding how to generate a cover sheet electronically is available in the folder for assignment 1. A word count and reference list must be provided at the end. Your assignment must also be submitted electronically to www.turnitin.com. You need to enroll in the class at the website. The class name is LT 207, the password is also LT207 (no space), and the class ID is 8254214.

ESL Learner Profiles

A. Willie is 7 years old, and she came to Auckland with her parents a month ago. Her prior exposure to English back in her own country was almost zero. She is placed in a mainstream class with children who are native speakers of English, and she has trouble communicating with her classmates and teachers. Her parents hope that she becomes fluent in English as soon as possible. She is talkative and likes to have lots of friends. She likes to watch cartoon movies in English and read picture books. However, she hates the grammar exercises her mom (previously an ESL teacher) asks her to do at home. Her mom noticed that she reads fast and doesn't care about details. She is good at getting her ideas across through means other than language such as gestures. While her speaking skill has been improving, she has made little progress with writing and is unable to write any grammatical sentences. Her parents are worried about her English, and they fear that this disadvantage will have long-term negative effect on her academic performance at school.

B. Titan is 17 years old and has been in the country for six months. He is not enrolled in high school because he needs to help his mother support their family of five. He finished elementary school in his own country and can read and write in his native language, but he can read almost nothing in English. He wishes he could keep up with the conversations of the young people at his work and become friends with them. Titan really likes the popular culture of this country, and he is strongly interested in getting integrated into the local community. He wants to speak and behave like a Kiwi. Whenever possible, he tries to talk with native speakers and do things that involve the use of English such as watching English TV programs and movies or listening to English songs. He attends an adult ESL class twice a week, often after working a double shift. But he is frustrated with the conversational and relaxed environment of his class, which is nothing like his schooling back home, where he was known for his ability to memorize grammar rules and new words. Titan is meticulous in learning the language and likes to pay attention to details.

C. Jentel is 60 years old and has come to New Zealand from Goody, where he worked in the office of a municipal government. He is embarrassed about being in a beginning-level class, and he does not like to work in groups. He is shy and prefers to be alone. When he speaks in front of the class, he is visibly uncomfortable and anxious. He is keen to become a good speaker of English but is frustrated to be told that it might be unrealistic given his age. Jentel shows his frustration when unable to speak fluently in class or to the teacher, yet he wants her to correct everything he says. He thinks that his biggest problem is vocabulary, so he uses flash words to help him remember words. On the other hand, he spends most of his time with his family and fellow Goodians. He does not understand the culture of this country and feels uncomfortable speaking with native speakers. So a lot of times, he tries to avoid speaking with native speakers.

D. Beatriz, on the other hand, prefers to be corrected later or in private. This is not much of a problem for her, however, because she is rarely heard in her ESL class. Nevertheless, her relative silence in ESL, like her advanced math and science courses, is not due to a lack of comprehension of the material. Beatriz is often seen by her teachers taking extensive notes, which she then uses to supplement in-class instruction by reading online. However, despite all her efforts, she doesn't seem to have made much progress in her English skills, which is hard to understand given her excellent performance in other school subjects. She is only 16 and has had trouble making friends. She is more concerned, however, with learning enough English to do well on school tests and to make her father proud.