Success Rate Factors
For Heritage Language Learners

Abstract

Factors affecting the success rate for heritage language speakers

**Personality Factors:** The two personality factors maximum affecting a heritage, second or foreign language acquisition are motivation (an affective factor) and tolerance to ambiguity (a cognitive factor). Personality variables (self-esteem, motivation, inhibition, risk-taking, anxiety, empathy, extro/introversion, etc.) defy adequate definition and measurement. As a rule, these variables constitute a continuum with an optimal point along it. Also, they undergo the impact of the differing cultural norms of verbal and nonverbal communication. Therefore, the variety and contradicting results from standardized test in different contexts.

Positive Factors

1. **Heuristic learning**
   Concepts, words, stories, etc. that students knew vaguely from whatever Armenian schooling or life in community they have begin to make sense—clarify, acquire structure, chronology, topology, etc.

2. **Motivation**
   Intrinsic-emotional: that’s what my father used to say
   Intrinsic-instrumental: my fiancée is Armenian
   Extrinsic-instrumental: the only subject I can definitely get an A
   Intrinsic-integrative: I went to Armenia I learned, enjoyed and want to know more

Negative Factors

1. Inhibition about one’s level of knowledge, self-esteem problems
2. Cultural prejudice about one’s dialect and self-esteem and attitude problems
3. Low tolerance to ambiguity
4. Lack of real life communication

For complete beginners with Armenian background but no fluency in language:

1. Low tolerance to ambiguity
2. Lack or patchiness of explicit grammatical knowledge of English and difficulty understanding the grammatical concepts of the heritage language.
3. Huge transfer from English (or another primary language), as a result of these first two factors above.
4. Lack of exposure to the target language and the culture
5. High expectations sometimes ending in disappointment: I love it; so, it must be easy. Or: I used to speak it with my grandma when very little; so I must recover

For fluent speakers the least success rates are usually combined with:

1. Fluency with a total lack of academic knowledge
2. limited communication in ‘kitchen’ tongue
3. Must be easy attitude.