Individual Differences
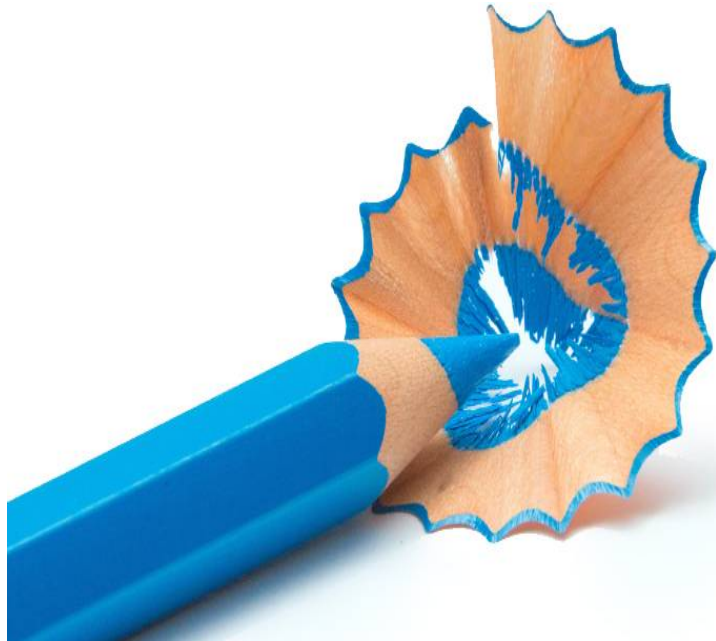
In second and foreign language learning

Individual Differences

in second and foreign language learning

1. **Intelligence** ▶▶
2. **Language Aptitude** ▶▶
3. **Motivation** ▶▶
4. **Learning Strategies** ▶▶
5. **Learning Styles** ▶▶
6. **Personality** ▶▶
7. **Learner beliefs** ▶▶
8. **Age of acquisition** ▶▶

1 **Intelligence** ▶▶

Intelligence has multiple types:

- Traditionally, intelligence refers to the mental abilities that are measured by an IQ (intelligence quotient) test. It usually measures only two types of intelligence: verbal/linguistic and mathematical/logical intelligence.

- There are other types of intelligence such as spatial intelligence, bodily-kinesthetic intelligence, musical intelligence, interpersonal intelligence, and intrapersonal intelligence.

Multiple Intelligences (Howard Gardner, 1993)

- **Linguistic intelligence**: *speaking, using words, writing, giving presentations, solving word problems.*

- **Logical-mathematical intelligence**: *using numbers, logic, calculations; learning and understanding grammar rules.*

- **Spatial intelligence**: drawing, painting, *using color, art, graphics, pictures, maps, and charts.*

- **Bodily-kinesthetic intelligence**: *muscular coordination, athletic skill, body language, drama and theater.*

- **Musical intelligence**: *using music, tones, hearing; producing the intonation and rhythm of a language.*

- **Interpersonal intelligence**: *talking with other people, understanding them, using language to communicate.*

- **Intrapersonal intelligence**: *self-knowledge, self-confidence, using language to analyze yourself.*

Conclusions:

- It is important to keep in mind that "intelligence" is complex and that a person has many kinds of abilities and strengths.

- An individual with strong academic performance does not necessarily mean that s/he is a successful second language learner.

2 Language Aptitude ▶▶

2.1 Phonemic coding
to identify and memorize new sounds

2.2 Grammatical sensitivity
to understand the function of particular words in sentences

2.3 Inductive language
to figure out grammatical rules from language samples

2.4 Associative memory
to memorize new words

* **Types of motivation** (in terms of communicative needs)**:**

Source / Purpose	Intrinsic (Internal)	Extrinsic (External)
Integrative	The learner wishes to learn L2 for personal growth and cultural enrichment.	Someone else (e.g., the learner's parents) wishes the learner to know L2 for an integrative reason.
Instrumental	The learner wishes to achieve practical goals using L2 (e.g., for a career).	External power wants the learner to learn L2 for a practical purpose (e.g., a corporation asks its staff to get language training).
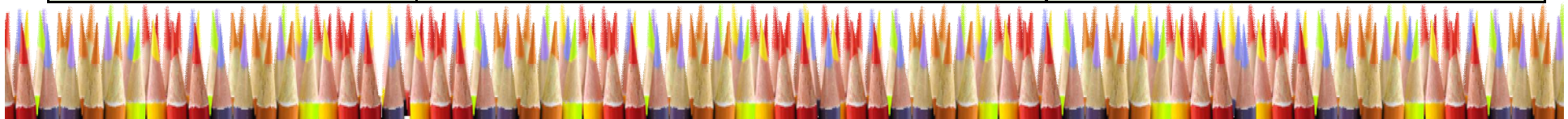
Motivation & Attitude

* Motivation in the classroom setting:

- Motivating students in to the lesson.

- Varying the activities, tasks, and materials to increase students' interest levels.

- Using cooperative rather than comperttive goals to increase students' self-confidence.

- Creating a supportive and non-threatening learning atmosphere.
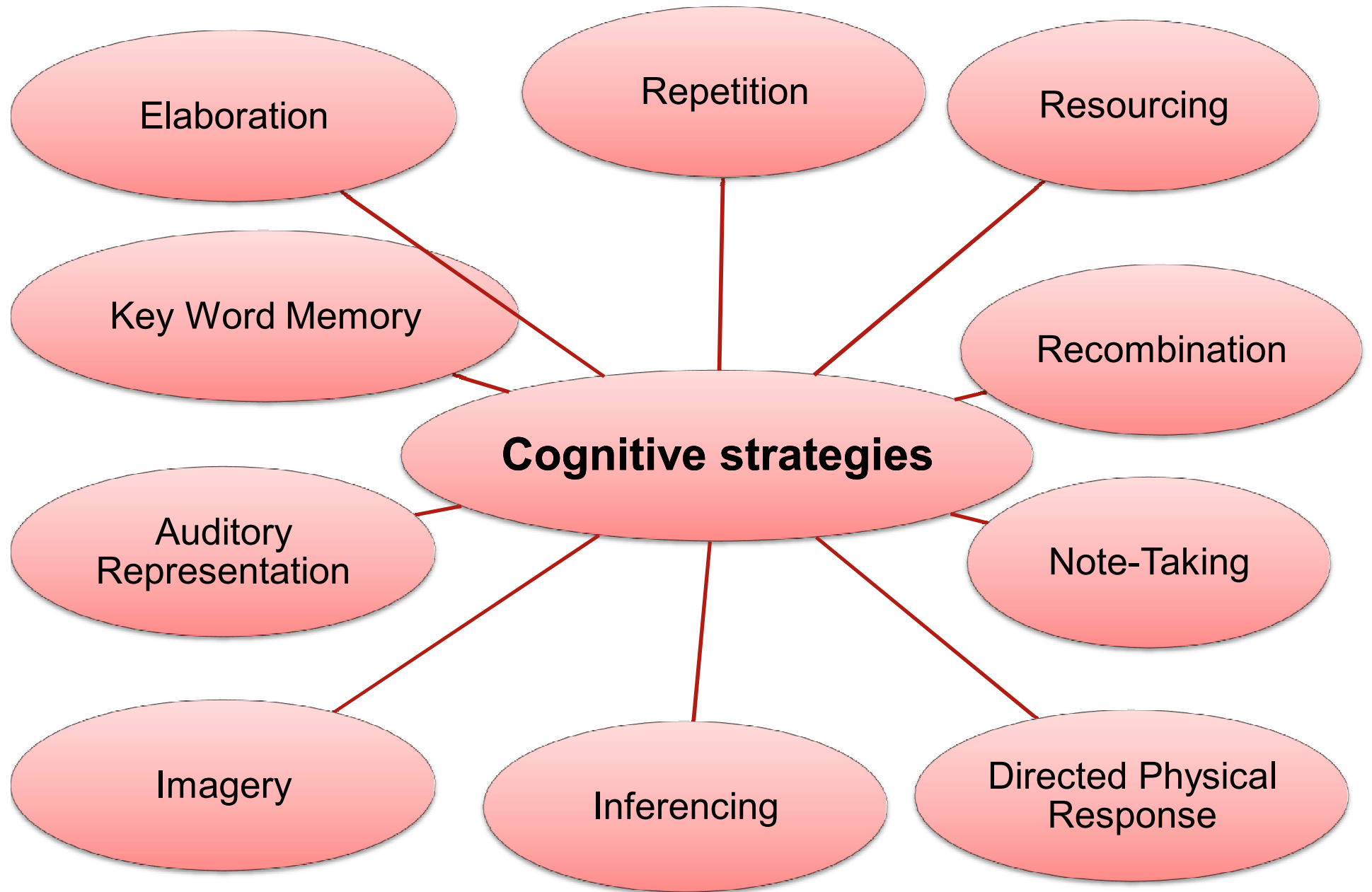
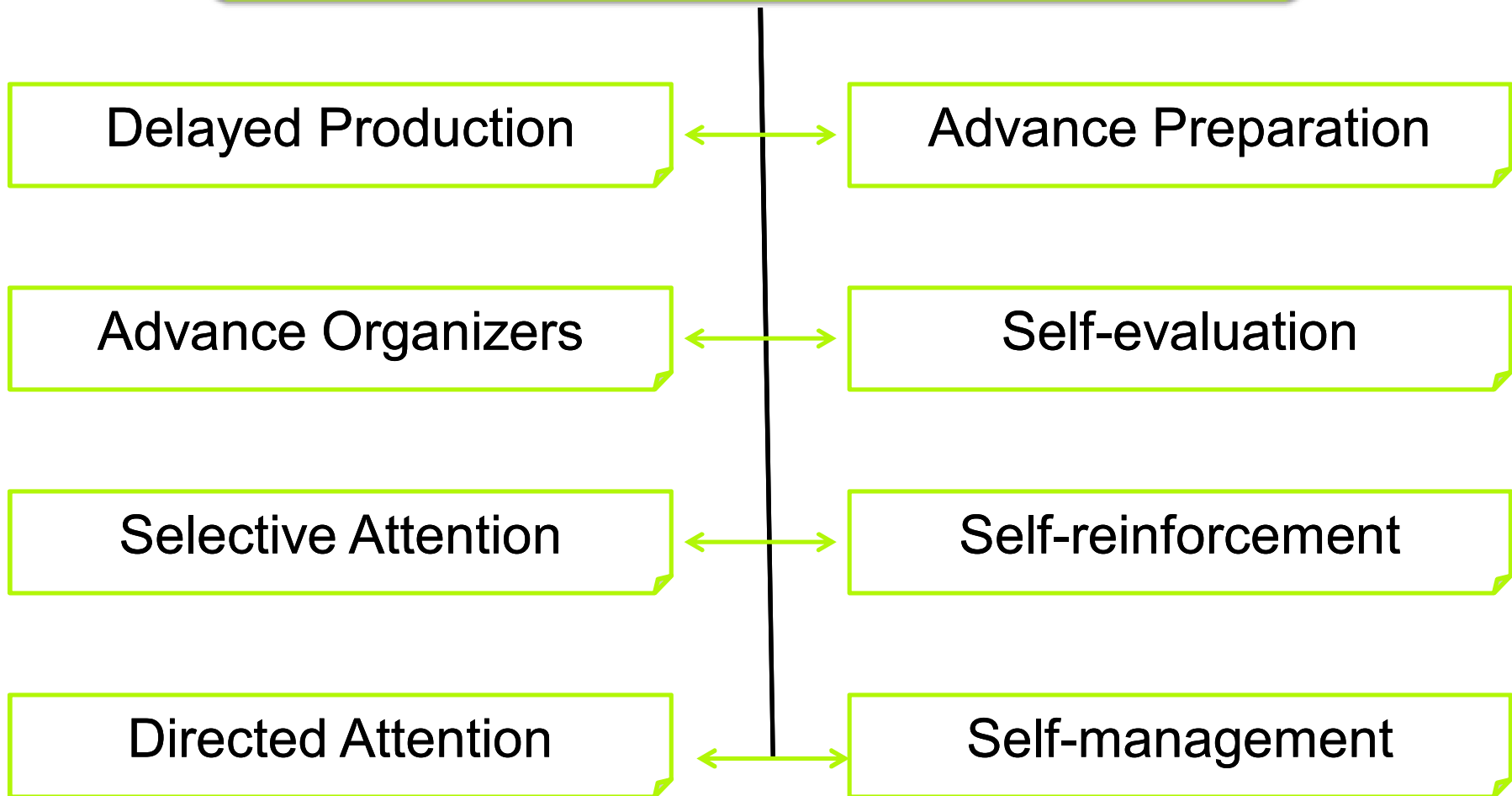**4** **Learning Strategies** ▶▶

4.1 Cognitive strategies

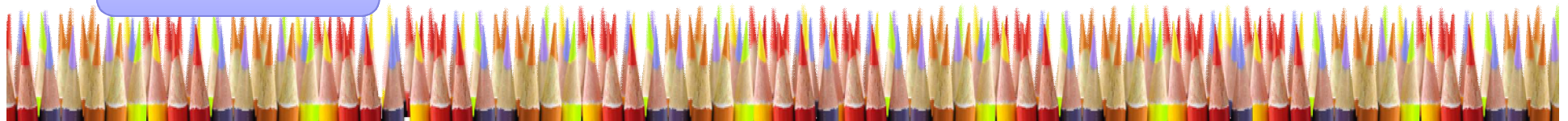**4.2 Metacognitive strategies**

4.3 Social and affective strategies

Cognitive strategies

- Elaboration
- Repetition
- Resourcing
- Key Word Memory
- Recombination
- Auditory Representation
- Note-Taking
- Imagery
- Inferencing
- Directed Physical Response

3.2 Metacognitive strategies

Delayed Production	↔	Advance Preparation
Advance Organizers	↔	Self-evaluation
Selective Attention	↔	Self-reinforcement
Directed Attention	↔	Self-management

3.3 Social and affective strategies

Questioning for Clarification

- Asking for explanation
- verification
- rephrasing

Cooperation

- Working together with peers
- Pool information

Self – talk

- Using mental techniques

5. Learner Preferences (Learning Styles)

- **Learning style** : an individual's natural, habitual, and preferred way of absorbing, processing, and retaining new information and skills (Reid 1995).

- Types of learning styles related to L2 learning:

1. Perceptual learning styles:

   visual, aural/auditory, and haptic (kinesthetic & tactile)

2. Cognitive learning styles:

- field-independent vs. field-dependent
   (tendency to see the trees or the forest)
- Reflectivity vs. impulsivity
- right-brain dominance vs. left-brain dominance
- Tolerance of ambiguity

Learner Preferences (Learning Styles)

❖ 5.1 **Perceptual learning styles:**

- **Visual learner**: *learns more effectively through the eyes (seeing).*

- **Auditory (aural) learners**: *learns more effectively through the ears (hearing).*

- **Haptic learner**: *learns more effectively through touch and body movement (a combination of the kinesthetic and tactile styles).*

- **Kinesthetic learner**: *learns more effectively through concrete body experience (body movement)*

- **Tactile learner**: *learns more effectively through touch (hands-on).*

5.2 Cognitive learning styles

Learning Styles

field - independent

FI

FD

field - dependent

more analytically

attention to details
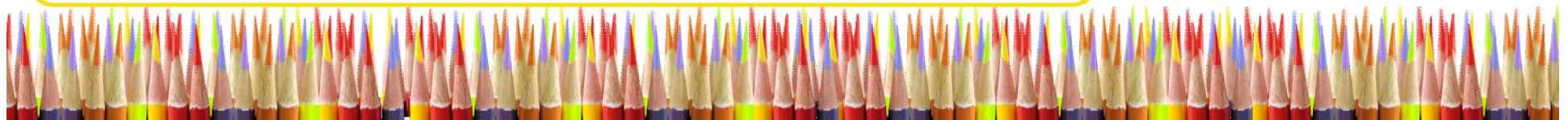
mastering of exercise

focused drill activities

more holistically

the communicative aspects

social outreach, empathy perception of other people

FI/FD may also prove to be a valuable tool for differentiating **child** and **adult language acquisition** due to the fact that **FI increases as a child matures to adulthood**

Learner Preferences (Learning Styles)

☆**Cognitive learning styles (2):**

reflectivity vs. impulsivity

- **Reflective learners** tend to make a slower, more calculated decision. They are usually more systematic and more cautious in learning L2.

- **Impulsive learners** tend to make a quick guess at an answer to a problem.They are usually more intuitive and more willing to take risks in learning L2.

Learner Preferences (Learning Styles)

☆**Cognitive learning styles (3):**

right-brain vs. left-brain dominance

• **The right brain** perceives and remembers visual, tactile, and auditory images. It is more efficient in processing holistic, integrative, and emotional information.

• **The left brain** is associated with logical, analytical thought, with mathematical and linear processing of information.
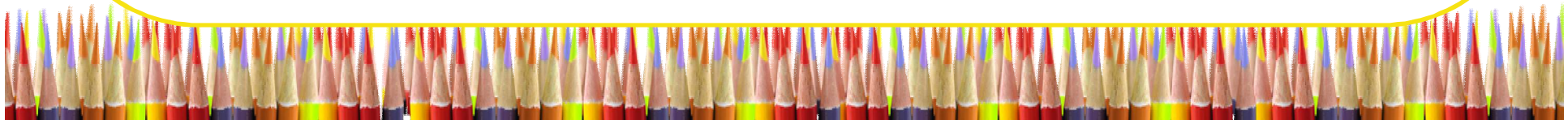
6. Learner Beliefs

☆ Virtually all learners, particularly older learner, have strong beliefs about how their language instruction should be delivered.

☆ Learner beliefs are usually based on previous learning experiences and the assumption that a particular type of instruction is better than others.

Learner Beliefs

☆ **Implications:**

1) Learners' preference for learning, whether due to their learning styles or to their beliefs about how language are learned, will influence the kinds of strategies they choose to learn new material.

2) Teachers can use this information to help learners expand their repertoire of learning strategies and thus develop greater flexibility in their second language learning.

7 **Personality** ▶▶

5.1 Extroversion vs. Introvesion

5.2 Self esteem

5.3 Inhibition

5.4 Risk - taking

5.5 Anxiety

8. Age of Acquisition

1) Younger is better (particularly in phonological achievement)

2) Older learners may well speak with an accent because they want to keep their L1 identity

3) It's more efficient to begin L2 after children's native language remines the primary language (eg. at age of 10-12)

**Summary
Individual Differences**

complex

not easy to interpret

lack of clear definitions, methods for measuring

not independent one another

Take into account to create a learning environment in which more learners can be successful in learning on L 2

How to teach students

- that are behind others
- that less talented
- that are slow learners

What does " a struggling learner" mean?

Who is a Struggling (slow) Learner?

Scores consistently low on achievement tests

Functions ability significantly below grade level

Ability to learn below average same age peers

Works well with 'hand on" material

Difficulty following multi-step directions

Classroom Recommendations

Repetition

Differentiated Instruction

Environment change seating

Peer tutoring

Classroom grouping

How to teach slow learners?

Environment

- Fun and comfortable
- Short work periods
- Time out of seat

How to teach slow learners?

Teachers' Speaking

Repetition

Emphasize strengths

Give short specific directions

Reinforcement frequently

How to teach slow learners?

Challenging but allows success ←→ Cooperative grouping

Concrete ←→ Tasks simplify

Not too hard/easy ←→ "Show me" techniques mapping, clustering

Heterogeneous grouping ←→

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