**Larbi Ben Mhidi University**

**Departement of English**

**Module: Acquisition**

**Definition:**

Generally speaking, Aptitude is the ability, innate or acquired capacity for something.it is the readiness, quickness, and especially the intelligence in learning.

The concept of language aptitude is related to the broader concept of human abilities, covering a variety of cognitive based learner differences.

Language learning aptitude refers to the “prediction of how well, relative to other individuals, an individual can learn a foreign language in a given amount of time and under given conditions.”

**L2 learners differ in how fast, how well and by what means they learn their L2.**

* **The psychological factors:**

In order to understand the different learning rate among L2 learners, SLA researchers look at the psychological factors and make a distinction among the following concepts: according to Ortega (2009), the following factors are defined as:

* **Cognition:** how information is processed and learned by the human mind.
* **Affect:** encompasses issues of temperament, emotions and how L2 learners feel towards information, people, objects, actions and thoughts.
* **Conation:** how L2 learners use their will and freedom to make choices that result in new behaviours.

So, all those factors interact together in a symbiotic manner that influences individual differences.

**Ortega (2009), the seven different psychological factors that lead to a difference in learning rate:**

1. **Gender**
2. **Cognitive style**
3. **Personality**
4. **Age**
5. **Aptitude:** which is one of the major key points in influencing L2 learning rates.
6. **Motivation:** it is considered to be an internal process that gives behavior, energy, direction that make learners think positively.
7. **Learning strategies:** which are undertaken by the learners themselves in the environment to help themselves to communicate.

**Language Aptitude Constituent Abilities:**

* **According to Carrol (1981), language aptitude comprises four constituent abilities.**
* **Phonemic coding ability:** Anability to identify distinct sounds to form associations between these sounds representing them, and to retain these associations.
* **Grammatical sensitivity:** the ability to recognize the grammatical functions of words in sentences.
* **Inductive language learning ability:** Theability to identify patterns and relationships involving grammatical form and meaning.
* **Rote learning ability:** the ability to learn association between sounds and meanings rapidly and efficiently to retain those associations.

**Pimsleur(1966) conceptualized “the aptitude for learning a modern language” in terms of three factors:**

* **Verbal intelligence:** that is the knowledge of words and ability to reason analytically in using verbal materials”
* **Motivation:** whoseproblematic position within the aptitude complex.
* **Auditory ability:** ability to receive and process information through the ear.

**The Role of Aptitude in SLA:**

* In the domain of L2 learning, aptitude has traditionally been seen as a key factor. Ehrman and Oxford (1995) took place a large survey of individual differences. They found that aptitude measures were the individual difference variable most strongly correlated with L2 proficiency.
* JOHN CARROLL (1981) First person to talk about language aptitude.
* In an article reviewing early aptitude research John Carroll (1981) defines general aptitude “Capability of learning a task’, which depends on ‘some combination of more or less enduring characteristics of the learner”.
* In the case of language aptitude the capability involves a special propensity for learning an L2.

**Instruments used to measure aptitude:**

The modern language aptitude test (MLAT) (Carrol& Sapon 1959)

The Pimsleur language battery (PLAB 1966)

**The Modern language Aptitude Test:**

-It was developed initially for foreign language instruction at the foreign institute in the United States.

- It was designed for selecting, guiding and placing children in the foreign language in the elementary school program.

-Carroll and Sapon (1959) followed a “Psychometric approach”, while dveloping the first scientific language aptitude test, the MLAT

-Carroll and Sapon’s MLAT does not include separate measure of Inductive language learning ability, perhaps this is very close grammatical sensitivity.

**Parts of Modern Language Aptitude Test:**

MLAT is composed of five parts:

**Number learning:** subject hear some numbers in a new language, and are provided with some auditory practice to learn, then they must translate 15 numbers.

**Phonetic script:** students hear a set of nonsense words while they follow their printed phonetic script, which is presented in fairly simple and regular symbols, then they hear one word at a time and must choose from four printed alternatives.

**Spelling** **clues:** It looks like a vocabulary test, in which subject may choose from five alternatives, the word which is nearest in meaning to a test word.

**Words** **in** **sentences**: This test measures grammatical sensitivity.

**Paired** **associates**: student have only four minutes to memorize24 word pairs. Retention is tested by means of multiple choice test in which subject must choose the proper equivalent.

**The Pimsleur language aptitude battery(1966):**

-It was developed as an alternative to MLAT, measures a very similar range of abilities to MLAT, but has no test of verbal memory.

-In this test, a score is awarded for “grade point average in academic areas” as a measure of intelligence.

**The Pimsleur language aptitude battery is composed of six parts:**

**Grade point Average:** students have to report the grades, they last received in areas other than language learning

**Vocabulary:** Its tests word knowledge in English and is measure of verbal ability.

**Interest in foreign language learning:** It measures student’s interest in foreign language learning.

**Language analysis:** It tests the student’s to reason logically in terms of a foreign and is another aspect of verbal ability.

**Sound discrimination:** it tests the ability to learn new phonetic distinction and to recognize them in different context and is a measure of auditory ability.

**Sound symbol of association:** it tests the ability to associate sounds with written symbols and is another measure of auditory ability.

**Aptitude, Ability and Intelligence:**

**Ability and Aptitude**: Language aptitude means exactly the same as language ability and is typically meant to denote language learning ability.

Zoltan Dornyei(2005)

**Intelligence:**

Intelligence usually has a broader meaning, referring to a general sort of aptitude that is not limited to a specific performance area but is transferable to many sort of performance. Zoltan Dornyei(2005)