

The Role of Aptitude and Attitude in Career Building

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Abstract

Several factors play a role, and are responsible for learning and selecting a career for future. They can be classified as universal aspects and individual differences. The universal aspects are considered as the main concern for learning and are quite natural for every individual. However, the importance of individual differences can also be taken as a serious issue. The individual dimensions are many and various. The preferred ways of learners to select their subjects may affect their overall orientation to the learning and the kind of input they find easier to work with. Among the individual differences, attitudes, beliefs, age, aptitude, motivation, personality, anxiety, and learning styles and strategies are of vital importance. These factors can influence the degree of learning the individuals experience during the learning process and their preparedness to take risks in learning and selecting a discipline. Among these factors, aptitude can be considered as an internal factor (inborn or natural) whereas attitude is an external factor. The various restrictions, limitations, links, interdependence, contributions and relation between aptitude and attitude are discussed in this paper. The purpose of the paper is to help the students (learners) to select their future career according to their aptitude and attitude. The teachers, parents and other individuals can also be benefited from the paper by guiding their students and children in the right directions.

Aptitude is the natural or in-born ability to learn. In fact, it concerns the cognitive abilities that underlie successful learning. A person with high aptitude (for a subject) learns it more quickly and easily than a person with low aptitude. The aptitude is, in fact, a combination of various abilities. If we consider language as a subject, here as a test case, then some of the abilities to teach the subject (language), are to identify sounds patterns, to recognize the different grammatical function of words in sentences, rote learning ability and the ability to infer language rules. It has been suggested that the people differ in the extent to which they possess a natural ability for learning a subject.

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Aptitude is believed to be in part related to general intelligence. Rod Ellis in his book "Second Language Acquisition" (2008) discussed it in detail. He identified a number of components of language aptitude which are:

- **Phonemic Coding Ability:** This is the ability to identify the sound of a second language so that they can be remembered later. This ability is also seen as related to the ability to handle sound–symbol relationships (for example, to identify sound which ‘th’ stands for)
- **Grammatical sensitivity:** This is the ability to recognize the grammatical function of words in sentences (for example, the subject and object of a sentence).
- **Inductive language learning ability:** This is the ability to identify patterns of correspondence and relations between form and meaning (for example, to recognize that in English “to” can denote direction and “at” location)
- **Rote learning ability:** This is the ability to form and remember associations between stimuli. This is believed to be important in vocabulary learning

Psychologists have formulized a traditional assumption that people’s natural capabilities varies. This assumption can be observed in our everyday life when we say that someone is ‘gifted’ or “specially gifted” or has little talent for something. However, an important point and observation with regards to aptitude is that a person with low aptitude might work harder. Then, we can say that “A” has higher aptitude for a skill than B. It means that A should do better in this skill if and only if everything else remains equal between A and B. Determination of aptitude is a little bit complicated. However, factors such as general intelligence, retention (ability to hold things in the memory), and auditory discrimination (ability to hear differences, particularly small ones, between different sounds) are vital ingredients in individual learning aptitude.

The accurate measurement of individual aptitude is very difficult. The tests introduce, so far, to measure learning aptitude, have not been convincing but the intuitive feelings that learners differ in aptitude persists strongly among teachers and other observers of the learners. According to the findings of Horwitz, aptitude is a special ability. It is also found that children and women are better at language learning and Mathematics students are not so good in language learning

Attitudes: Attitude means a way of thinking, acting, or feeling. In fact, attitude determines how well an individual performs a task or thinks about it. The attitude is a behavior which a community has towards the language and culture of other languages or to their own language. Attitude may also show what people feel about the people of other communities. Attitude may have an effect on a subject or discipline. The role of the community (society) is very important in mobilizing and changing the attitude of individuals.

The measurement of attitude provides information which is useful in teaching and learning planning. Certain other terms also go with the attitude, for example, ego, which is the relation between people's feelings of personal identity, individual uniqueness and value, and aspects of their own learning.

Language learning is profoundly influenced by the attitudes of the learners. The attitudes of learners may be positive or negative. A learner with a negative attitude will do less than someone with a positive attitude. However, what one really needs to know is what promotes various attitudes. It is a Herculean task to study attitudes of various individuals because people are often unwilling to reveal their true, most deep seated attitudes, and indeed may often not be consciously aware of what they are and their inclination towards a particular task, subject or community. It is a common observation that successful learners are likely to be those with positive attitudes towards the countries and cultures associated with the subject being learnt. A positive attitude correlates with proficiency, however, not in children as their attitudes are not fully mature and can be fixed with the passage of time. It is also said that in some exceptional cases, proficiency in second language still possible if negative attitude persists. The example is the Mexican minority and some communities living in South Asian countries like India and Pakistan. In Pakistan, due to the long rule and historical facts, we have developed a negative attitude towards English culture and English language, so qua a community we have a negative attitude towards English language and culture. Though English language is considered, nowadays, as lingua franca and an international passport to the world community, however due to a peculiar attitude learners are not usually good at it.

There are certain tests to determine the aptitude and attitude of the individuals. Through these tests the various features of learners can be judged. These tests are especially designed to focus on the individual differences of the individuals. In fact, these tests are available on various websites and with the help of questions given over there, the individuals can find out their personalities and learning trends. The well known websites and questions are given on; Myers-Briggs Type Indicators available at <http://www.humanmetrics.com/cgi-win/JTypes2.asp> & <http://www.sil.org/lingualinks/LANGUAGELEARNING/PrepareForLanguageLearning/CheckingYourAttitudes.htm>

The students from various departments (BCS, B A, and MBA, and teachers from English Department, in Edwardes College Peshawar, Khyber Pakhtunkhawa, were asked to go to the above websites, for finding out about their attitudes,. This page comes under the SIL International website. On this page they found a link to a learning attitude questionnaire.

The students downloaded the file and completed the questionnaire. All the questions and other information are given as Appendix III. Answer the following questions:

- Do you agree with your scores on the various subcategories of language learning attitude? Why (not)?
- To what extent do you think this questionnaire accurately measures attitudes towards language learning?
- Are there any elements identified in the literature which appear to be missing, or are there elements included which according to you do not form part of a learner's attitude towards language learning?

For learning and personality style Myers-Briggs Type Indicator is a very interesting test.. With the help of this test information about style of learning can be obtained. The learners have various features like, extroverts, introverts, perceivers, judges etc. They can be judged with the help of certain questions. The website <http://www.humanmetrics.com/cgi-win/JTypes2.asp> is a very informative and interesting. The questions given over there are about 72 in number (The questions are given in Appendix P attached). The students were asked to comment on the outcome of the questionnaire, and provide that to the concern. The questions for the students were:

- How accurate do you think the outcome of this test is?
- Does it describe your personality type/learning style adequately? Why (not)?
- Do you agree with your scores on the various subcategories of learning attitude? Why (not)?
- Read the descriptions of the types found there after answering the questions.

The questions for the teachers (English Department) were:

- *To what extent do you think this questionnaire accurately measures attitudes towards language learning?*
- *Are there elements included which according to you do not form part of a learner's attitude towards language learning?*
- *Do you see a use for such a personality type/learning style test in the language classroom? Why (not)?*

After completing the questionnaire, the learners obtained their type formula according to Carl Jung and Isabel Myers-Briggs typology. They students who attempted the questions given over there, they also got description of their personality type. Some of the general features or Myers- Briggs type's indicators are: Personality type, Extrovert, introvert, Sensing, intuition, thinking, feeling, judging, perceiving, etc.

Accordingly; those have extravert features use external strategies, have a need for variety and stimulation, and are verbally and physically active. Introverts are using individual strategies, they like meta-cognitive strategies and dislike affective and social strategies. They can get a benefit of safe learning environment and well-planned home work. The sensing type's learners use a wide variety of strategies, like memorization, cognitive and meta-cognitive strategies with a low tolerance. They prefer a sequentially organized course with clear goals. The intuitive types take a global approach to learning, are able to learn independently and have a vivid imagination. The thinkers are good in cognitive content and social communication; they can function best in a business-like atmosphere.

The feelers have a very strong social orientation, they are mostly integrative. They require a harmonious learning environment in which cooperative learning is stimulated. The judgers: Judgers have a need for control and pre-structured syllabus. They like meta-cognitive strategies and have a strong need for achievement. The perceivers are open to ambiguity, like compensation and cognitive strategies, they do not like routine. They can function best in a flexible, individualized learning program. This brief and slight introduction was provided to the students. The students attempted the questionnaire and the result was almost according to their style of learning.

Our learning and thinking style

There is another test as well. Once a group of scholars was selected for training, I was one of them. During the workshop a set of question was distributed among the participants with the statement that: "The human mind is a mastermind. It has two halves, the left and the right. They have their own features and characteristics. The left has nothing right in it and the right have nothing left in it." The learners can be classified accordingly; Left A'(s) ----- Right B'(s)----- Whole Brain C'(s)

Then certain questions were distributed among the participants. These questions are so valid and important that anyone can use it anytime. The questions are given in Appendix II. After answering the given questions, the scores of A, B, and C can be put in the given spaces. We are given the methods of computing the scores. Accordingly, A should be minus from B. The obtained score is a minus or a plus. If the score of C is 15 or higher, then B minus A score should be divided by 3. The given score should be rounded up to the nearest. It can be a minus or a plus number.

If C score is from 9 to 14, then B minus A score should be divided by 2. The answer will be the required score, either plus or minus.

If the score is less than 9, it not should be divided at all. B minus A is the score. Plot your score below

A score of zero (0) Whole brain dominance.

A score of -1 to -6	Whole brain dominance favouring the left
A score of -7 or lower	Left brain dominance.
A score of +7 or higher	Right brain dominance

The characteristics of these features are also available in the concern books of psychology. They can be summarized as follows:

Characteristics of Right-Brain Learners

Right-brain learners think intuitively and respond well to open ended activities

Right brain learners have a common sense approach to problem

Right learners remember faces.

Right brains learners make subjective statements

Right brain learners are spontaneous, impulsive, flexible and creative. Right brain learners solve problem through synthesis.

Right brain learners are free with feeling.

Right brain learners prefer essay tests.

Right brain learners lack a strong sense of and structure.

Right brain learners “see the forest”

Characteristics of Left Brain Learners

Left brain learners are national, logical and verbal.

Left brain learners like fact and knowledge.

Left brain learners remember names

Left brain learners make objective judgments.

Left brain learners respond to structure, order, and rules.

Left brain learners solve problems through analysis.

Left brain learners control feelings, emotions.

Left brain learners prefer multiple choice tests.

Left brain learners like schedules and lists and have a well developed sense of time.

Left brains learners “see the trees”

Relationship of aptitude and attitude: Both these factors can be termed as integrated factors. They are related with each other directly and indirectly. Aptitude is an internal inborn quality while attitude is an external factor. Attitude may be positive or negative, or both at the same time.

Conclusion

From the above discussion it can be concluded that aptitude and attitude are very vital for learning. They depend on each other and support each other in learning. They differ from individual to individual and affect the learning. Consciously or unconsciously, the learners are using them and can be benefited from them according to the prevailing environment. They affect the nature and the frequency with which individual learners use learning strategies. For the children (learners) the teachers, and parents, their role is very vital in the future and career building.

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Appendix-P

The Common Questions: (Answers were sought in Yes or No)

1. You are almost never late for your appointments
3. You like to be engaged in an active and fast-paced job
4. You enjoy having a wide circle of acquaintances
5. You feel involved when watching TV soaps
6. You are usually the first to react to a sudden event: the telephone ringing or unexpected question.
7. You are more interested in a general idea than in the details of its realization
8. You tend to be unbiased even if this might endanger your good relations with people
9. Strict observance of the established rules is likely to prevent a good outcome
9. It's difficult to get you excited
10. It is in your nature to assume responsibility
11. You often think about humankind and its destiny
12. You believe the best decision is one that can be easily changed
13. Objective criticism is always useful in any activity
14. You prefer to act immediately rather than speculate about various options
15. You trust reason rather than feelings
16. You are inclined to rely more on improvisation than on careful planning
17. You spend your leisure time actively socializing with a group of people, attending parties, shopping, etc.
18. You usually plan your actions in advance
19. Your actions are frequently influenced by emotions
20. You are a person somewhat reserved and distant in communication
21. You know how to put every minute of your time to good purpose
22. You readily help people while asking nothing in return.
23. You often contemplate about the complexity of life
24. After prolonged socializing you feel you need to get away and be alone
25. You often do jobs in a hurry
26. You easily see the general principle behind specific occurrences
27. You frequently and easily express your feelings and emotions
28. You find it difficult to speak loudly
29. You get bored if you have to read theoretical book
30. You tend to sympathize with other people
31. You value justice higher than mercy
32. You rapidly get involved in social life at a new workplace
33. The more people with whom you speak, the better you feel
34. You tend to rely on your experience rather than on theoretical alternatives
35. You like to keep a check on how things are progressing
36. You easily empathize with the concerns of other people
37. Often you prefer to read a book than go to a party
38. You enjoy being at the center of events in which other people are directly involved

39. You are more inclined to experiment than to follow familiar approaches
40. You avoid being bound by obligations
41. You are strongly touched by the stories about people's troubles
42. Deadlines seem to you to be of relative, rather than absolute, importance
43. You prefer to isolate yourself from outside noises
44. It's essential for you to try things with your own hands
45. You think that almost everything can be analyzed
46. You do your best to complete a task on time
47. You take pleasure in putting things in order
48. You feel at ease in a crowd
49. You have good control over your desires and temptations
50. You easily understand new theoretical principles
51. The process of searching for solution is more important to you than the solution itself
52. You usually place yourself nearer to the side than in the center of the room
53. When solving a problem you would rather follow a familiar approach than seek a new one
54. You try to stand firmly by your principles.
55. A thirst for adventure is close to your heart
56. You prefer meeting in small groups to interaction with lots of people
57. When considering a situation you pay more attention to the current situation
58. You consider the scientific approach to be the best
59. You find it difficult to talk about your feelings
60. You often spend time thinking of how things could be improved
61. Your decisions are based more on the feelings of a moment than on the careful planning
62. You prefer to spend your leisure time alone or relaxing in a tranquil family atmosphere
63. You feel more comfortable sticking to conventional ways
65. You are always looking for opportunities
66. Your desk, workbench etc. is usually neat and orderly
67. As a rule, current preoccupations worry you more than your future plans
68. You get pleasure from solitary walks
69. It is easy for you to communicate in social situations
70. You are consistent in your habits
71. You willingly involve yourself in matters which engage your sympathies
72. You easily perceive various ways in which events could develop

At the end there is an automatic scoring process.

Appendix II

OUR LEARNING STYLE Encircle A, B or C for the description that is most suitable to your personality. Please mark only one choice:

Note: (There are 50 questions in total but only first ten are given here for reference purpose. For details about all questions one may refer to the source web page)

1. I remember best:
A. Names B. Faces C. both names and faces
2. I prefer to have thing explained to me :
A. with words B. By showing them to me C. both ways
3. I prefer classes:
A. with one assignment at a time B. where I work on many things at once C. Both ways
4. I prefer:
A. Multiple choice tests B. Essay tests C Both kinds of tests
5. I am;
A Not good at body language, I prefer to listen to what people say
B Good at body language C. Some times good. But some other times not good.
6. I am;
A. Not good at thinking of funny things to say and do. B. Good at thinking of funny thins to say and do. C. Some times good.
7. I prefer classes;
A. Where I listen to “experts” C. In which I move around and try things.
B. Where I listen and also try things.
8. I decide what I think about things
A. by looking at the facts. B. base on my experience. C. both ways.
9. I tend to solve problems.

A. with a serious, business-like approach B. .with a playful approach c. with both approach.

10. I like:

A. to use proper materials to get jobs done B. to use what ever is available to get jobs done.

C. a little of both.