

ABSTRACT

Thesis Title	: Factors Influencing Learning English as a Second/ Foreign Language at Upper Intermediate Level: A Qualitative Micro Study
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Gaining insights into language learning is vital in improving the language teaching/ learning process. Many language teaching theories are based on an understanding of the factors that influenced students' language learning. The present study explored and analyzed some of the factors relative to social context, affective and personality factors, and learning conditions and learning processes that influenced learning the English language.

A simple quantitative analysis of the scores of the Oxford Language Aptitude Test allowed the selection of three case studies, which included three participants each chosen by purposive selection. The data collection process, over two semesters, involved conducting in-depth individual interviews, focus group interviews, writing field notes on participant observations, and analyzing student journals. These triangulation factors strengthened the internal validity and consistency of the collected data and study design. An informal qualitative analysis throughout the data collection process helped determine the kind of data to be collected next. Writing analytical memos after interviews, and tentatively coding the interview accounts continued until categories emerged. Six hypotheses were formulated through within-case analysis and cross-case analysis of the three case studies.

In the present study, it was found that the factor in a social context contributing to success in learning English was *active and effective parental support*, because the participants were freshmen who just graduated from high school. The contributing affective and personality factors were *a high level of motivation* that resulted from a *'good' attitude toward the whole learning situation and their role in learning English, their 'integrativeness', strong 'desire' and 'effort' made to learn English, and past achievement*. The significant factors in learning condition included *opportunities to learn and use English in English-speaking communities*, and *exposure to English through formal and informal learning*. *Subjects being autonomous in learning English* were found to have contributed to success in learning English at the upper intermediate level.

English instructors, as facilitators and managers of students' English learning process, should create more opportunities to maximize students' exposure to the English language through formal and informal learning situations, while convincing the students to be autonomous in learning English and keeping them motivated to achieve a high degree of success in learning English.

