

Wednesday 3 June

3:20pm - 4:00pm

Room: Block Y, Room Y305

Presentation Title: Investigating emotion in independent language learning: Issues and research methods

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Theme:	Learner and teacher experiences
Presentation Type:	Paper presentation (Reviewed)

Abstract

Affective factors continue to move up the SLA research agenda as the place of emotions becomes more firmly embedded in theories of learning and language learning (Beard *et al.*, 2007; Putwain, 2007; Oxford, 1999; Young, 1999; Arnold, 1999) and in line with a growing consensus that 'learning processes cannot be understood without taking emotional and motivational variables into account' (Gläser-Zikuda & Järvelä, 2008). Such investigations pose, however, considerable challenges in terms of both content and process. Firstly, emotions are notoriously difficult to define, let alone research, particularly with independent learners who are not readily available for observation or investigation. Secondly, the affective dimensions of learning are seen by many to be messy, difficult to pin down, and less important than cognitive considerations. Moreover, many learners do not feel comfortable talking about their feelings and emotions, regarding such talk as peripheral or superfluous to the 'real matter at hand' or even as evidence of weakness.

This paper discusses research methods for investigating the affective domain, and evaluates a study which attempted to chart the emotions of learners engaged in language activities at a distance in order to develop a better understanding of their impact on the learning and teaching experience.

References:

- Arnold, J. (ed.) (1999) *Affect in Language Learning*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- Beard, C., Clegg, S. and Smith, K. (2007) Acknowledging the affective in higher education. *British Educational Research Journal*, 33 (2), 235-252.
- Gläser-Zikuda, M. and Järvelä, S. (2008) application of qualitative and quantitative methods to enrich understanding of emotional and motivational aspects of learning. *International Journal of Educational Research* 47, 79-83.
- Oxford, R.L. (1990) *Language Learning Strategies: What Every Teacher Should Know*. MA, Boston: Heinle and Heinle.
- Putwain, D.W. (2007) Test anxiety in UK schoolchildren: prevalence and demographic patterns. *British Journal of Educational Psychology* 77 (3), 579-593.

Young, D. (1999) *Affect in Foreign Language and Second Language Learning: A Practical Guide to Creating a Low-anxiety Classroom Atmosphere*. USA: McGraw-Hill College.

Biodata

Stella Hurd is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Languages at the Open University, UK. Her research interests include learner autonomy, learner difference, learning strategies, metacognition and affect in self-access and distance language learning. She has published on all these topics and also co-edited four books on adult language learning.