

# Self-Esteem and Foreign Language Learning

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“The learner’s task is enormous because language is enormously complex.”

P.M. Lightbrown 1985, 2000

Language learning is so much more **ego-involving** than other fields of study and is an **anxiety-provoking** experience for many students.

Many learners experience anxiety when they feel that they are **unable to “be themselves”** when speaking a new language, and more advanced learners may actually be more sensitive to differences between their **true identity** and the version of themselves they can communicate in the new language (Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope 1986).

When **native-like competence** is the **goal** for the students, they often **felt frustrated**.

When learners compare themselves and are compared to native speakers, they will inevitably come up short. Such comparisons contribute to poor **self-esteem**.

# What is self-esteem?

“The disposition to experience oneself as being **competent** to cope with the basic challenges of life and of being worthy of happiness” (Branden 1994)

Basically, self-esteem is a **psychological and social phenomenon** in which an individual evaluates his/her competence and own self according to some values, which may result in different emotional states, and which becomes developmentally stable but is still **open to variation** depending on personal circumstances.

Six are the major components or dimensions of self-esteem:

- Competence and worthiness.
- Cognition and affect.
- Stability and openness.

Low worthiness and low competence leads to low self-esteem, resulting in negativistic behaviour so **self-esteem** is **crucial** for personal and academic growth.

**School** has importance as a **determining influence** on the individual's self-esteem. In school, students are constantly evaluating their competence in classroom tasks and performances.

**Language learning** is an anxiety-provoking experience for many students because of of the **disparity** between the "**true**" **self** as known to the language learner and the **more limited** self as can be presented at any given moment in the foreign language.

How can we help students see themselves as able to complete worthwhile goals.?

We should provide a **supportive atmosphere** in which we can better encourage learners to work hard to reach their learning potential unhindered by the negative affect Krashen (1982) referred to with his metaphor of the affective filter.

Teacher should encourage students to **interact frequently** with other students and teachers by **using the language they know**.

Researchers have revealed that **cooperative learning** provides strong academic improvement, as well as overall positive benefits in student behavior, self-esteem, and motivation.