

# An Analysis of the Affective Factors Affecting George I's English Learning

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**ABSTRACT.** *Affective factors are important aspects that affect foreign language learning. This article analyzes the affective factors which affect George I' English learning during his time as the king of England. The aim is to draw the attention of foreign language educators to the influence of affective factors on foreign language learning, and to mobilize learners' positive emotional factors to improve the effect of foreign language teaching.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Affective factors; Foreign language learning; George I*

## 1. Introduction

In studying the effect of affective factors on foreign language learning, Brown (2000) has said that among the many aspects of human behavior, affective domain are the most important ones that determine the success of foreign language learning. These factors include motivation, self-esteem, extroversion, empathy etc [1]. The affective filtering hypothesis proposed by Kreshan (1982) also points out that a variety of affective variables relate to the success of foreign language learning, and he explores the influence of these affective factors on language acquisition from the categories of motivation, self-confidence, and anxiety [2].

George I, who was the first Hanoverian king of Great Britain, refused to learn English during his 13 years in office. Based on many former academic researches, this article analyzes the specific affective factors which affect George I' attitude towards learning English, and then points out that foreign language educators should pay attention to the impact of emotional factors on learners and give full play to the positive role of those affective factors in foreign language teaching.

## 2. The Affective Factors Affecting George I's English Learning

### 2.1 Motivation

The motivation in foreign language learning refers to the learners' strong desire to learn a foreign language. It is an internal motive force directly promotes learners to learn a foreign language well. Foreign language learners with strong motivation will have better results, and passive foreign language learners often regard this learning as a burden, thus the learning effect is obviously not good.

George I was born on May 28, 1660 in the city of Osnabruck Hanover of German states. His father, Ernest Augustus, was the Elector of Hanover, and his mother was Sophia, the granddaughter of King James I, king of the Great Britain in Stuart dynasty. Ernest Augustus died in 1698 and George inherited his father's throne as the Elector of the Holy Roman Empire. In 1701, the British Parliament passed the "Act of Settlement", which stipulated that the British throne would be succeeded by the heirs of Queen Mary. After her death, if Mary had no descendants, she was succeeded by Annie, another daughter of James II, and if Annie died without any immediate descendants, the throne would pass on to James I's granddaughter, Sophia. But because Sofia died before Queen Anne, the heir to the British throne was on Sofia's eldest son, George. The unexpected kingship didn't give him much pleasure. As Rebecca (2006) describes "he was always more interested in Hanover in northern Germany, where he had lived all his life and ruled as an absolute autocrat, than in Britain, where he was constantly troubled by the vociferous House of Commons" [3]. During his reign as king of England, George I returned to his hometown of Hanover for many summers, each time ranging from months to half a year. As can be seen from the above records, George I, as a foreign king, has no deep love for this country and strong desire for the government administration. Definitely he has no any motivation to learn English as a foreign language. So for nearly 13 years in office, he mostly spoke with his native language German.

## **2.2 Interest**

Learning interest refers to the emotional intention of learners to acquire certain knowledge. Interest can be divided into short-term interest and long-term interest. Short-term interest refers to the temporary interest of the brain in new knowledge acquisition, such as learners' attention to the new lesson taught in class. Long-term interest refers to the learners' strong willingness to acquire language, such as a student not only actively takes part in the classroom learning, but also voluntarily finds ways to improve language knowledge and skills after class. A large number of studies have shown that there is a significant positive correlation between learners' interest and learning effect.

On August 1, 1714, George I became first monarch of the Hanover dynasty in England at the age of 54. At the very beginning, he felt quite enthusiastic to be the king and attended the Cabinet meeting occasionally. Since he could not speak English, he communicated with his ministers in French. Ragnhild (2001) points out George I's personal preference might be one explanation for his use of French instead of learning English: "French was the polite language of society in Europe and the one he had grown up with" [4]. But very few of the ministers knew French at that time, so it is very hard for him to convey his ideas even with the help of interpreters. Gradually, he grew weary of the tedious king's affairs and the cabinet meetings. Later soon, he stopped attending the cabinet councils and met with the key ministers in private from time to time. Although he had the supreme authority there, as an elderly man, he preferred a calm and carefree life to a busy king of a foreign land. Besides, as a native German aristocracy, though George I had become the king of England, he cared more about Hannover's territory and even about his mistress and his private life instead. He almost had no intention of integrating into the English people and the local life of England, but also had no intention of learning English and actively participating in the management of state affairs.

## **2.3 Personality**

Broadly speaking, one's personality can be divided into extroversion and introversion, and the two different personalities have different effects on foreign language learning [1]. It is generally believed that extroverted personality is helpful for foreign language acquisition, while introverted personality is not conducive to foreign language acquisition.

J.M.Beattie (1996) records that "there was a dominant in his character an extreme shyness of crowds and a dislike of formality" and "whenever he travelled, the routes were carefully chosen in order to avoid as many civic receptions as possible" [5]. For his first journey from Hanover to England in 1714, for example, instead of choosing a grand reception ceremony, he asked his secretary to choose the most convenient path to avoid much embarrassment and a great of people. George I's thirteen years of living in England were almost confined to the palace of St James's and he never courted popular acclaim and only rarely showed himself to his people. Therefore he has a secure reputation as "a recluse" [5]. The arrangement of his private life had been simple in Hanover and his life remained simple in England as well, for he took advantage of very few of the innumerable rights and courtesies to which he was entitled. One of his simple requirements was to have an inner German court (which included gentlemen of the bedchamber, grooms, pages and footmen) instead of many English servants. As Wolfgang Michael (1936) writes, "[George I] lived a retired life in the bare palace of St James's, and who, as a consequence, hastened the decline of the court as the center of social life if not political life" [6]. Obviously, this introverted personality makes George I had little contact with native English speakers, which naturally affects his learning of English.

## **4. Conclusion**

From the above analysis, it can be seen that although George I was the king of Great Britain, because of the influence of advanced age, introversion personality and lack of motivation and interest, he refused to study English while living in England nearly for 13 years. From the example of George I, we can see that affective factors have a great impact on foreign language learning. Foreign language teachers should pay attention to the influence of these emotional factors and try to mobilize learners' positive affective variables to improve the effect of foreign language teaching.

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