

## Introduction

Arts students are a unique group of EFL (English as a Foreign Language) learners because they are professional, focused, and talented in their own fields such as dance, music, painting, acting... etc. Some arts students are born to be talented in the arts and others practice hard to become professional artists. In 1993, a significant chronological marker known as “Mozart makes you smarter,” a project conducted by researchers at the University of California, Irvine, seems to have recaptured people’s attention regarding the role of arts in learning. Supporters of this marker claim that cognition can be developed through learning music, reading achievement through drama, problem-solving through the visual arts, and persistence through dance. In a language learning context, music performance can increase self-efficacy and self-concept, whereas integrated arts can enhance reading skills and achievement motivation. However, some skeptics believe that those claims are based on flawed research. In addition, psychologist Gardner (1999) mentioned in his article “The happy meeting of multiple intelligences and the arts” that

certain learning skills in the arts are likely to spill over. He stated that learning arts and participating in the arts can cultivate language awareness, judgment, ability, sensibilities, and other cognitive attributes that are associated with artistic intelligence. Art skills and artistic intelligence are closely related and may involve a certain type of transfer. However, when arts students study English, do they still believe that they are born with intelligence for language learning? To what degree do they believe that they can successfully learn English? Alternatively, how can they use their artistic intelligence for learning English?

Digging through the history of motivation (Kusurkar, Croiset, Mann, Custers, & Ten Cate, 2012), Murray proposed the “need to achieve” theory in 1938; Hull brought us “drive theory” and Maslow proposed the “theory of hierarchy of needs” in 1943; McLelland and his colleagues developed a method for scoring achievement motivation in 1953; Atkinson stated his “expectancy-value theory” in 1966, and Horner added his “motive to avoid success theory” in 1968. After that, Weiner identified “attribution theory” in 1974; Bandura proposed “social cognitive theory” in 1977, and

Deci and Ryan articulated “self-determination theory” in 1985. In recent years, Pintrich penned his “goal theory” in 2000, and Dweck and her associates developed “mindset” or “implicit theory” (Dweck, 2006; Dweck, Chiu, & Hong, 1995). They first introduced the concept of mindset in 1995, and she published a book titled *Mindset: the New Psychology of Success* in 2006. Mindset was adopted to bring the old to the new. It refers to the belief that certain students are born with a special, remarkable talent in a particular field and that this is not uncommon. Mindset, or implicit theories, is constructed with two perspectives: fixed mindset (or entity theory) and growth mindset (incremental theory). Mindset is related to human attributes, such as intelligence or personality. Some people think these attributes are static or fixed; they say there is nothing we can do to change them, which creates a fixed mindset. For instance, the most common excuse arts students use when they fail an English test is that they only have talent in art, but not in English. Therefore, there is nothing they can do to better their language skills. They find a good reason to justify their low English proficiency level. However, other people regard these

traits as being more malleable because humans always have the ability to change themselves; this is called a growth mindset. In the foreign language learning context, it is believed that some students are gifted language learners, born language learners, or are good at languages. In the research of second language acquisition, talent is regarded as aptitude (Mercer & Ryan, 2009). In this project, we are more interested in finding out if the arts students, who are talented in their professions, also believe that they have some form of aptitude for languages and if they attribute their achievements to this. Perhaps it is an oversimplification to divide a person’s mindset as either a growth or a fixed mindset, so it might be possible for students to have a growth mindset in one particular domain and a fixed mindset in another. However, for some students, they are high English proficiency learners and they are also talented in music and dance. Therefore, the first purpose of the project is to see whether or not the arts students regard themselves as having a fixed mindset or growth mindset in learning English. Do they believe they have talents in arts, and do they also believe they can learn English well? Mercer (2011a, 2011b,