CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review of the study is divided into three sections. The first

section concerns about the exploration about the relationship among attitude,

motivation, and foreign language learning. Related studies on the relationship are

presented. The second section focuses on the essence of culture learning and its

efficacy on foreign language learning. Finally, the last section introduces the

definition, characteristics, and empirical research on low achievers.

2.1 Attitude and Motivation in Foreign Language Learning

2.1.1 Concept of attitude and motivation

Attitude and motivation are widely discussed in social psychology and are also

pointed out as crucial to many problems of learning (Haque, 1989). Despite the

multiple views on their definitions suggested by different theorists and psychologists,

we can still perceive a general concept of what they are.

Attitude refers to an individual's feeling, belief, or reaction toward an object or a

class of objects such as culture or a foreign language. It can be positive or negative

depending on the degree of one's beliefs about a certain target, feelings about that

target, and action tendencies with respect to that target (Allport, 1954). Allport

(1954) pointed out that "an attitude is a mental and neural state of readiness,

organized through experience, exerting a directive or dynamic influence upon the

individual's response to all objects and situations with which it is related" (p.63).

Lambert and Lambert (1973) also defined an attitude as "…an organized and

consistent manner of thinking, feeling and reacting to people, groups, social issues or,

more generally, to any event in the environment" (p.72). It is through the process of

human experiences with the outside world, one's attitude is gradually organized and

developed. And from one's attitude, we can perceive one's feelings, belief toward certain object, idea, action, and event. That is to say, it is one's attitude that molds one's behavior and action. One's possible behavior or reaction toward a certain object can thus be predicted through the observation of one's attitude toward certain matter (Haque, 1989).

Motivation, generally agreed, means one's need or desires to do something or to fulfill a goal. Hunter (1967) defines motivation as "a state of need or desire that activates the person to do something that will satisfy his need or desire" (p.4). Motivation can be referred to as *intrinsic* and *extrinsic motivation*. Brown (2000) pointed out people's desire or need to do something may be the results of either intrinsic, extrinsic motives, or both—those who are intrinsically motivated to seek for their own desired needs and goals, and those who are extrinsically motivated to pursue a goal only to receive an external reward from others (Brown, 2000). Extrinsically motivated behaviors are aimed to receive extrinsic rewards such as good grades or to avoid punishment, while intrinsically motivated behaviors are performed to acquire certain internally rewarding consequences such as fulfillment and feelings of competence (Brown, 2000; Dornyeï, 1990).

Another dichotomy of motivation is the identification of *instrumental* and *integrative motivation*. Robert Gardner and Wallace Lambert (1972) in their study on second language learning referred to these two kinds of motivation as accounting for the motive to learn a second language. *Instrumental motivation* referred to learning a language in order to acquire instrumental benefits like getting good grades, scholarship and so on, while *integrative motivation*, on the other hand, referred to learning a language so as to integrate oneself into the second cultural group and become part of it. Gardner and MacIntyre (1991) further modified the dichotomy as a case of orientation; that is to say, a learner's context or orientation—either

instrumentally (academic or career related) oriented or integratively (culturally or socially) oriented—decides a learner's desire to attain his or her goal in learning a foreign language.

Haque (1989) further clarified the difference between orientation and motivation. He submitted three characteristics of motivation—"attitudes towards learning the language," "desire to learn the language," and "motivational intensity." Take "integrative motivation and orientation" as an example, Haque implied that integrative motivation covers more elements than integrative orientation. According to Haque (1989),

> An integrative motivation implies an integrative orientation linked with effort expended to achieve this goal, a desire to learn the language, and favorable reactions to the language and language community. Integratively oriented individuals may tend to be more highly motivated than individuals with other orientations, but this association is not guaranteed a priori. (p.63)

The clarification of the nature of the learner's attitude and motivation is vital and a must for those who endeavor to get a better understanding of the role of motivation and attitude in foreign language learning.

2.1.2 Relationship between attitude and motivation in foreign language learning

Attitude and motivation are closely related to each other. Attitude determines a person's level of motivation and motivation predicts one's attitude towards certain matter (Gardner and Smythe, 1975). Before the 80s', the roles of attitude and motivation in foreign language were hard to distinguish definitely; the two had usually interwoven together into lots of factors which are thought accountable for the success or failure in foreign language learning (Els et al., 1984).

After the 80s', the roles of attitude and motivation were redefined.   Gardner (1979) suggested that "social attitudes are relevant to language acquisition not because they directly influence achievement but because they serve as motivational supports" (p.205).   Attitude determines the degree of one's motivation, which directly affects one's language learning outcomes.   In other words, attitudes can be viewed only as "motivation supports", and there are other motivational factors that may determine one's language learning such as struggling for academic degree.   The relationship of attitude, motivation and achievement can be presented clearly in Figure 2.1.

Figure 2.1. Concept of Motivation and Attitude in Relevance to Language Learning.
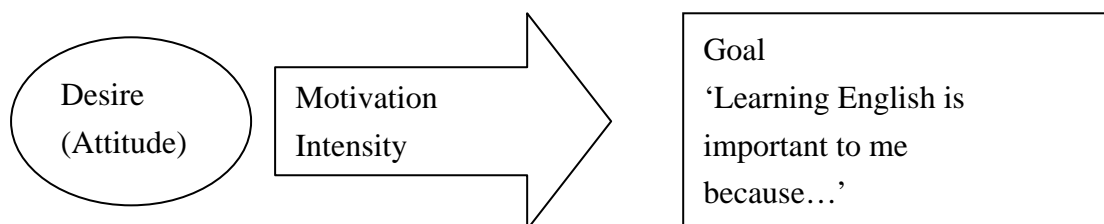
Note. 1. Adapted from Gardner, 1985, p.54.

2. Attitude serves as "motivation supports" and motivation decides directly the success or failure of one's language learning.

2.1.3 Studies on the interrelationship between attitude and language learning
2.1.3.1 Positive relationship between one's attitude and language learning

Many studies (Muller and Miller, 1970; Gardner, 1979; Lambert, 1967) have suggested the vital role of attitudes of learners towards the subject matter and the learning itself.   It is verified that positive attitude can enhance or lead to successful foreign language learning but negative attitudes may hamper or even preclude the occurrence of success in foreign language learning.

Much of the research in this area was triggered by Gardner and Lambert's findings. Gardner and Lambert (1972) conducted a study in Connecticut to test Ervin's theory (1954) that an individual's positive attitude toward the second language community motivates learning of the language spoken by those in that group and verified Ervin's assertion—people who are motivated to learn a second language are those who are interested in the language and have strong desire to enculture themselves in the foreign language community (integrative orientation). Gardner and Lambert (1972: 132) contended that

> …Success in mastering a foreign/second language would depend not only on intellectual capacity and language aptitude but also on the learner's perceptions of the other ethno linguistic group involved, his attitudes towards representatives of that group, and his willingness to identify enough with those valued members to adopt distinctive aspects of behavior, linguistic and nonlinguistic, that characterize that other group. The learner's motivation for language study, it follows, would be determined by his attitudes and readiness to identify with valued members of the other linguistic-cultural group and by his orientation to the whole process of learning a foreign language.

To put it in another way, Gardner and his associates hypothesized that attitudinal variables are conducive to motivation to learn, which is among the factors that eventually influences one's achievement in the language.

Still other findings support that positive attitudes toward foreign language learning are crucial to successful language learning experience. Spolsky (1969) made use of an instrument that compares a subject's attitude to his native speakers and to speakers of a foreign language in order to examine the relationship between the subjects' attitude and proficiency in English. Spolsky (1969) submitted that "one of the most important attitudinal factors is the attitude of the learner to the language and

its speaker" (p.271).   Muller and Miller (1970) found that attitudes towards French-speaking people were related to grades in French.   And Jacobsen and Imhoof (1974) also emphasized the importance of learners' attitude toward the language community.

Chihara and Oller (1978) examined the relationship between responses on attitudinal questionnaires and proficiency scores of 123 Japanese adults who studied English at the YWCA in Osaka, Japan.   In the study, the Japanese tended to be integratively motivated to study English by two reasons: (a) getting to know many different kinds of people and (b) getting to know English-speaking people.   This study also underlined the positive correlations between attitude and attainment in English.

2.1.3.2 Negative and irrelevant relationship between one's attitude and language learning

Still quite a few studies doubt and even deny the assertion that the positive relationship between positive attitude toward foreign culture and the outcome of language learning (Gardner and Lambert, 1972, the Maine studies; Oller, Becca, and Vigil, 1977; Clement and Kruidenier, 1983; Svanes, 1987; Au, 1984; Lai, 1984). Some researchers also have called for more empirical studies to clarify the controversial topic (Haque, 1989; Pimsleur, 1964).

Contrary to the previous assumption that the ones who are culturally integrative toward the foreign/second culture stand more chance of the successful language learning experience, a study conducted by Gardner and Lambert (1972) in Maine indicated that the 145 subjects (English speaker learning French) were mainly motivated by professional and social advantages (instrumental orientation).   Also Gardner and Lambert's study in Philippines (1972) also suggested that students who

considered themselves integratively oriented were significantly less proficient than the instrumentally oriented ones.

Paralleling Gardner and Lambert's Philippine's study, Lukmani (1972) conducted a study in India to investigate the relationship of English learners' motivation and achievement.   Among the subjects of the 60 Marathi girls from a high school class, those with high proficiency performance revealed a high level of instrumental orientation; though they admired certain traits of English-speaking individuals such as independent and freedom, they were still reluctant to become part of the English-speaking group.

Another empirical study was conducted by Oller, Baca, and Vigil in 1977.   This study investigated vocational female students' English learning of Mexican-Ameircans.   They reported that students revealing a negative attitude toward Americans might still attain English proficiency.   In addition, students' instrumental orientation toward English learning also correlates positively with their test scores on English language measures of proficiency in the study.

A study of Chinese students learning English as a foreign language by Lai in 1984 also focused on the correlation between students' attitude and language achievement.   The subjects of the study were 137 freshmen at universities in Taipei. The results showed that students' positive sympathetic attitude toward American people and its language and culture did not significantly relate to their language achievement.

Haque (1989) conducted a survey among 240 tenth grade students randomly selected from high schools in Dhaka City, Bangladesh.   The analysis of the data revealed that the students in the study are instrumentally oriented toward learning English language, and the students' achievement in English is still related significantly and positively to their attitudes toward learning situation.   Haque also

found that a modest positive association between teachers' and students' attitudes to the target language.   It is recommended in Haque's study that a parallel study should be done further in different context to see if there are any similarities or differences in relevance to attitude, motivation, and achievement.

The inconsistent results of the research findings on attitude, motivation and achievement have made the issue in debate all the time.   A culturally or socially different setting seems to lead to different results.   Nevertheless, it is believed that a positive attitude of the language learner can be molded and developed through the teacher's elaborative instruction.

2.1.3.3 Attitudes toward foreign language learning—nurtured

Some studies (e.g. Hovland & Weiss, 1951; Mills & Aronson, 1965) have also verified that there are several dimensions of teaching and learning which can have influence on learners' attitudes.   Haque (1989) pointed out that "if teachers are skilled in the language and attuned to the feelings of their students, they can do a lot towards the awakening of positive attitudes, regardless of whether students' initial attitudes are positive or negative" (p.44).   In other words, positive attitude toward foreign language learning can be inspired and negative attitude, on the contrary, can be discarded through teachers' elaboration.

In a study, Riestra and Johnson (1964) found that those students who have studied Spanish have more favorable attitudes towards Spanish-speaking people. Gardner and Smythe (1975) also found that the years of learning the second language is highly relevant to students' attitude toward the other community and language. These seem to suggest that positive attitudes can be cultivated by language learning experience.

With many studies verifying the crucial role of positive attitudes to

foreign/second language learning, language teachers need to encourage learners'
positive attitude toward the foreign language being learned. Just as what Byram et al.
(1994) offered:

> It (encouraging positive attitudes) is usually taken for granted that this is an
> acceptable purpose, perhaps because positive attitudes are so self-evidently good
> and because encourage does not necessarily imply that attitudes should be
> changed. It can simply mean that existing positive attitudes are further
> nurtured in and through language and culture learning. (p.35)

Through language learning and culture learning, language teachers who want to exert
great influence on learner's attitudes must pay much attention to the message they
intend to convey (Byram et al., 1994). This does not mean to present only the
positive facts of foreign language to learners; instead, two-sided (both positive and
negative) information should be provided (Hovland & Weiss, 1951)

An effective culture-learning program can help learners recognize and respect
differences, reduce intercultural biases, effectively cultivate international
understanding and foster cross-cultural awareness, which can thus greatly increase
their integrative motivation to learn foreign languages. As Gardner and Smythe
(1975) emphasized that in the dynamic process of language learning, affective
variables influence language achievement, and achievement and experiences in
language learning can influence some affective variables. Culture learning contexts
can lead to both linguistic and non-linguistic outcomes. Students can acquire not
only some language forms and functions but also affective benefits such as positive
attitudes toward the other language group and intentions to use the language in the
future. Consequently, cultural learning is considered to be beneficial to low
achievers' language learning.

2.1.4 Summary of the section

Though it was mentioned that attitude, motivation and foreign language are closely related, the viewpoints on the relationship between learners' attitude and language learning remained controversial during the past decades.   Many studies were conducted to exemplify whether learners' positive attitude toward language may lead to positive language learning experience or not, and more and more studies suggested learners' positive language learning attitude can be inspired, for example, by the application of culture learning.   However, this area still requires more researchers to investigate the relationship between learners' attitude and language learning in different contexts.

2.2 Culture Learning and Foreign Language Learning

2.2.1 Necessity of culture learning in language learning

Culture learning is often neglected or introduced as no more than a supplementary diversion to a language instruction (Arries, 1994).   Kramsch (1991) pointed out that political and economic changes have enlarge the area of foreign language teaching and that communicating with real people around the world has made cultivating learners' communicative competence even more crucial to language learning.   Besides, changes in second language learning theories have suggested that culture should be highlighted in language classroom.   It can't be denied that a language is a part of culture, and a culture is a part of language; the two are intricately interwoven (Brown 2000).   Therefore, one cannot separate the two without losing the significance of either language or culture.

From a sociolinguistic perspective, competence in language use is determined not only by the ability to use language with grammatical accuracy, but also to use the language appropriately in particular contexts (Savignon, 1983).   The sociolinguists

Swain and Canale provided one illustration of the shift to contextual use as the foundation of competency. They divided communicative competence into four categories: grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse and strategies (Swain and Canale, as cited in Hadely, 1993, p.7). In which, sociolinguistic competence refers to the use of the appropriate linguistic codes in a context. In other words, it emphasizes the appropriate use of language in specific cultural contexts. From this viewpoint, culture should become an important element of the language classroom, because cultural knowledge lies behind sociolinguistic competence.

Schema theorists proposed that culture as key to language learning in terms of individual's cognitive process. Alptekin (1993) admitted that deficiencies in cultural background knowledge create language difficulties. It follows that understanding the culture of the reading text is essential to successful language learning.

Cultivation theorists have also provided a rationale for addressing culture in foreign language classroom. According to the assertion of the cultivation theorists, culture effects change in individual perception and are thus vital for expanding an individual's perspective of the world. Both learners and teachers of a second or foreign language need to understand cultural differences and to recognize openly that people are not all the same beneath the skin. There are real differences between groups and cultures. We can learn to perceive those differences, appreciate them, and above all to respect and value the personhood of every human being. This positive attitude toward the second or foreign language is expected to foster language learning (Condon, 1973).

Culture is also a process of meaning generation (Tseng, 2000). Tseng (2000) asserted that learning culture is a vital process of language learning and it makes language learning become meaningful and thus effective.

Culture learning has even been considered as coming before language learning

by some language educators.　　Wright (1988) in her preface to the *Klagenfurt papers* underlined the importance of culture content in language learning.　　She asserted that, "language courses must have meaning and true content in order for any real learning to take place" (p.8).　　Buttjes (1988) also held that culture content greatly increases a learner's motivation to learn a foreign language.　　It is believed that effective culture learning can truly attain some non-academic objectives like better cross-cultural understanding and the pleasure of cultural learning, which lead to more opportunity of students' success in language learning.　　Battista (1984) also reported that students in foreign language classrooms considered culture a more enjoyable aspect of their classes.　　The learning of a foreign culture can serve as a medium, making the study of a foreign language more attractive and providing a really welcome relief from the grammar and vocabulary exercises (Kramsch, 1991).　　Interest in a foreign culture does increase motivation and stimulate language learning (Heusinkveld, 1997).　　As a result, frontline teachers need to incorporate cultural learning into low achievers' English learning.

The different ways linguists, language practitioners, curriculum designers, sociolinguists, schema theorists, and cultivation theorists expressed their views on the indispensable status of culture learning in language classroom spotlight the role of culture.

2.2.2 Difficulties in culture teaching

Though the incorporation of culture study in language learning has been proposed for decades, the integration of culture and language teaching remains a challenge (Hadley, 2001; Arries, 1994).　　Hadley (2001) attributed the problems of culture instruction to the following reasons: (a) overcrowded curriculum discourages the teacher from implementing culture learning in the language learning which still

prioritizes grammar; (b) the teaching of cultural values and attitudes makes it quite controversial for a language teacher to get into the area—"a somewhat threatening, hazy, and unquantifiable area" (Gallway, 1985, cited in Hadley 1991, p.347); (c) language teachers' limited cultural background and time-consuming preparation work may result in a teacher's lack of confidence and will to teach culture; and (d) the incorrect approach to teaching culture—"facts-only" makes culture learning superficial and even negative and can not prepare students for true intercultural understanding.   Other theorists (Arries, 1994; Lange, 1998; Seelye, 1993; Huang, 1994; Tsai, 2002) have also mentioned about similar difficulties of teaching other culture; therefore, it is not an easy task for a language teacher to conduct appropriate culture instruction in a language classroom.

2.2.3 Goals of culture teaching

Culture instruction is a "need," and a well-designed plan for culture teaching for a special context is a prerequisite for successful language instruction.   Culture instruction should be purposeful; every cultural activity in the classroom should gear toward its learning goal (Seelye, 1997).   Seelye (1997) pointed out the overemphasis of the cultural facts may lead to superficial and invalid culture learning.   Lado (1997) also stressed that the systematic design of culture instruction is necessary.   Therefore, the organizational frameworks of culture instruction are crucial.

Scholars have proposed many versions of goal-oriented frameworks, which help organize a systematic culture instruction.   Lafayette (1988) proposed thirteen goals of culture instruction.   Through instruction, students should be able to:

1. recognize/explain major geographical monuments.

2. recognize/explain historical events.

3. recognize/explain major institutions (such as religious or educational

institutions)

4. recognize/explain "active" everyday cultural patterns (such as eating or

greeting people)

5. recognize/explain "passive" everyday cultural patterns (such as marriage or

social stratification)

6. act appropriately in common everyday situations.

7. recognize/explain major "artistic" monuments.

8. use appropriate common gestures.

9. value different people and societies.

10. recognize/explain culture of target-language-related ethnic groups in the

United States.

11. recognize/explain cultures of other peoples speaking the target language.

12. evaluate validity of statements about culture.

13. develop skills needed to locate and organize information about culture.

(p. 123)

These suggested five categories of culture (Lafayette; 1988), including (a)

knowledge of formal culture, such as art and history; (b) knowledge of everyday

culture, such as food and clothing; (c) affective objectives, such as valuing different

cultural practices; (d) multicultural objectives, such as understanding the target

culture; and (e) process objectives, such as the ability to evaluate a culturally-related

statement and developing research ability.   It is believed that with these goals

completed, students will get a sound picture of what culture is.

Seelye (1993) provided a modified framework of culture teaching that is

friendlier for users:

Goal 1- Interest.   The students show curiosity about another culture and

empathy toward it members.

Goal 2-Who.   The student recognizes how social variables such as age, sex,

social class, religion, ethnicity, and place of residence affect the way people

speak and behave.

Goal 3-What.   The student knows what culturally conditioned images are

evoked in the minds when they think, act and react to the world around

them.

Goal 4-Where and When.   The student recognizes that the situational variable

and convention shape behavior in important ways.

Goal 5-Why.   The student realizes that people generally act the way they do due

to some underlying reasons and cultural behavior and patterns are

interrelated.

Goal 6- Exploration.   The student can evaluate a statement about the target

culture reasonably and has the skills to locate and organize information

about the culture. (p. 102)

Seelye (1997) also pointed out that the goal of introducing students to the

cultural domain is to help them "communicate more accurately" and "understand

more completely the effect of culture on humanity."   Corresponding to his assertion,

the view that culture instruction should cultivate and foster students' competence of

intercultural communication and understanding has also been widely accentuated by

many scholars (Byram et al., 1994; Moran, 2001; Stapleton, 2000; Kramsch, 1991).

Nowadays, the goals of foreign language educational guidelines in many countries or

regions reflect the view.   For example, every state in the USA, having its own

specific objectives of cultural curriculum, has such goals as to "foster cross-cultural

awareness" (Texas), to "reduce cultural biases" and "help recognize and respect

differences among people and cultures" (Hawaii), and to "cultivate international

understanding" and to "cultivate responsibility and effective participation in a global

age" (Wisconsin).   A similar stress on culture pursuit can also be seen in English teaching policies in Taiwan.   In the junior high school curriculum of English (Nine-Year Integrated Curriculum website, 2001), the general goals related to culture teaching is to "facilitate the understanding of international affairs, understand and appreciate Chinese and foreign cultures, and increase the ability of cross-cultural awareness."

2.2.4 Suggestions and techniques of teaching culture

Successful integration of language and culture instruction requires a language teacher's elaborate preparation and design.   Hadley's suggestions (2001) on how to achieve the ideal integration of culture and language might be beneficial to those who endeavor to teach culture in the language classroom.   Hadley (2001) stated:

1. Cultural lessons and activities need to be planned as carefully as language activities and integrated into lesson plans.

2. Present Cultural topics in conjunction with related thematic units and closely related grammatical content whenever possible.   Use cultural contexts for language-practice activities, including those that focus on particular grammatical forms.

3. Use a variety of techniques for teaching culture that involves speaking, listening, reading and writing skills.   Do not limit cultural instruction to lecture or anecdotal formats.

4. Make good use of textbook illustrations and photos.   Use probing questions to help students describe and analyze the cultural significance of photos and realia.

5. Use cultural information when teaching vocabulary.   Teach students about the connotative meaning of new words.   Group vocabulary into culture-related

clusters.

6. Use small-group techniques, such as discussions, brainstorming, and role-plays, for cultural instruction.

7. Avoid a "facts only" approach by including experiential and process whenever possible.

8. Use the target language whenever possible to teach cultural content.

9. Test cultural understanding as carefully as language is tested.

(p.358)

Some useful strategies of teaching culture are also provided in the following:

1. Compare and comparison

The proper use of the strategy—comparison and contrast between the learner's culture and the culture under study—can enable the learner to start from their own schema culture and go into other culture smoothly and gently (Carrell and Eisterhold, 1983; Moran, 2001).   The process of culture learning is an on-going process of confronting with cultural similarities and differences which are sure to evoke learners' conscious, emotional reactions.   Cultural learners may also walk back and forth between their mother culture and the foreign culture instinctively.   It is impractical and impossible for a culture learner to discard and deny one's own culture totally and step into another culture.   One's own culture can serve as a medium—the background knowledge—to know about other culture.   By comparing the foreign and native cultures, a student will not only learn how the foreign language differs, but in many instances he or she will also get a deeper understanding of his or her own culture (Chuang, 2002).

The task of presenting an adequate comparison of the native culture and another culture is rather difficult.   Lado (1997) submitted a three-level model of cultural comparison and analysis—the comparison of form, meaning, and distribution.   He

asserted that a structural, systematic comparison of two cultures should encompass the three levels: form (facts, practice or phenomenon), meaning (what the cultural form means to the people in that culture), and distribution (the time, place, space and position of the patterned occurrence of form).   Only through the objective observation and analysis of these three levels can a culture learner avoid cultural misinformation and prejudice.

Tseng (2002) proposed a curriculum design which views culture as a process rather than a body of facts; students must be allowed and encouraged to recognize their own culture and to contact other cultures.   Through the native culture learning, language teachers can allow learners to demonstrate competence in what they are familiar with and thus to develop their confidence in learning other cultures (Arries, 1994).   It is believed that the application of "comparison and contrast" method provides a supportive learning environment for language learners to learn other cultures.   Some activities Tseng (2002) suggested are "Who I am," "Family stories," "Confronting taboos," "Culture as eating," and "Journaling into culture."

2. Presentation of a culturally related unit

For introducing culture in the English classroom, the presentation of a culturally related topic may be a useful method for English teachers (Pesola, 1991).   Pesola (1991) asserted that the direct application of information and experience from the target culture in a thematic unit could make language learning more meaningful. The cultural topics should be relevant to the need and interests of the students (Chuang, 2002), so that students' curiosity to know about the world can be truly quenched.   Arries (1994) also postulated that a true culture-learning curriculum would integrate students' interest in target culture and native culture with textbook content so as to make culture learning more comprehensible for learners and help them overcome the possible language difficulties in the process of culture learning.

The integration of the language part and the culture part in a curriculum should be given as much attention as possible.   He further proposed a tool, a culture interest inventory, to make use of students' background knowledge in the selection of culture content.   A list of cultural topics was distributed to the learners before the implementation of the culture learning project for them to choose the cultural topics they have interest in.   The active understanding of learners' "will" in culture learning is believed to be able to effectively motivate them to join culture learning experience. Additionally, in the process of the short presentation, the teacher should make use of appropriate pictures, slides, photos, realia and etc. to enliven the presentation.

3. Culture assimilators, culture capsules, and culture clusters

Seeyle (1997) suggested three useful techniques to enhance students' cross-cultural knowledge as well as four linguistic skills.   Culture assimilators are episodes which describe "cultural incidents" of cross-cultural interaction.   Some plausible explanations for "cultural incidents" are given at the end.   As for a culture capsule, it is composed of a passage of a short article focusing on exploring a difference between cultures along with some realia or pictures.   While a culture cluster is a combination of about three culture capsules on related topics and a simulation comes at the very end to integrate the information in the three capsules. These techniques can be used to foster students' writing, speaking, reading and listening abilities.

4. Use of computer technology

With the advances in computer technology in recent years, it is note-worthy that computer has brought much efficiency to culture instruction.   Through this supplemental aid, much first-hand cultural information is available for the non-native teachers.   Many papers and reports of cultural instruction have mentioned this aspect—making use of computer as a valuable resource for teachers to teach culture

(Tseng 1999; Hadley, 2001).   The uses of e-mails and World Wide Web provide a cheap and fast avenue for practical culture learning (Tseng, 1999).

5. Spiral curriculum

To present learners a step-by-step constructive, systematic, structured, and progressive culture learning curriculum, Byram et al. (1994) asserted the application of "a spiral curriculum" to help a language novice to get into the culture learning domain.   A spiral curriculum will first bring beginning learners a simpler culture learning in accordance with their language proficiency, and later with the progression of learners' language abilities, the same cultural topic will be introduced again in a more complex and thorough way—with a deeper analysis on cultural artifacts, practices, and perspectives.   The selection of cultural content and the presentation order of cultural knowledge following the progressive and repetitive mode are believed to be beneficial to novice learners' language learning and culture learning.

2.2.5 Studies on culture teaching and English learning in Taiwan

After a closer look at culture learning in foreign language learning, the focus of the section is culture teaching and English learning here in Taiwan.   Research on this issue is still lacking.

Tsai (2002) investigated how junior and senior high school English teachers conceptualize and instruct culture in their teaching of English.   A questionnaire covering various issues about culture instruction and English teaching was developed by the researcher and distributed to 158 junior high school English teachers and 125 senior high school English teachers in Taipei City via mail.   The results revealed that culture was generally considered significant in foreign language teaching and was instructed by most of the subjects in their teaching of English.   However, inadequacy concerning cultural teaching contents and processes was unveiled.   Besides, some

problems   including the deficiency of teachers' cultural knowledge, the inadequacy

of cultural components in the English textbooks and teacher's manuals, the difficulty

in obtaining cultural materials and resources, and the constraint of instructional time

were found to hinder the teaching of culture.

Another similar study was conducted by Yang (2004), who investigated

elementary school English teachers' opinions about culture teaching by a

questionnaire and interviews.   The researcher devised a questionnaire and obtained

responses from 148 English teachers from Chiayi County, Tainan County, and Tainan

City.   Eight subjects were chosen from the questionnaire respondents as interviewees.

It was found that elementary school English teachers' belief about culture teaching

had deep connection with their actual cultural instruction.   Most teachers approved

the importance of culture teaching in language learning and conducted culture

teaching in their classes to some extent.   Obstacles to culture teaching included strain

of long teaching hours, deficiency of cultural teaching materials and limited cultural

knowledge.   Some teachers also mentioned that elementary schools' culture teaching,

in particular, was confined to festival celebrations.

As to the application of culture learning in English learning, there are several

empirical studies on this area.   Lu (2003) investigated the effect of using

cross-cultural e-mail exchange projects on enhancing junior high school students'

language and culture learning.   Seventeen Taiwan participants, from grade 7th to

grade 9th, exchanged e-mail and cultural packages with students in three distance

groups (Pittsburgh, Illinois, Sweden) for nearly three months.   E-mail messages,

pre-project questionnaires, post-project questionnaires, interviews, and researcher's

observations were gathered and analyzed to yield insight into the junior high school

students' development of cultural awareness, enhancement of linguistic skills,

perceptions of the adequacy of exchange quantity and topics, and both difficulties and

solutions to such difficulties while doing the three cross-cultural e-mail exchange projects.   The finding shows that cross-cultural e-mail exchange projects are beneficial for not only junior high school students' cultural understanding but also their English learning motivation, communicative competence, reading and writing skills.

Tsai (2003) conducted an investigation on the effects of an interview project on English learning and cultural awareness of students in junior high school in Taiwan. The subjects' responses to the communication with the foreign interviewees are investigated first.   Then, the subjects' responses to cooperative learning, their cultural awareness, and their higher-level thinking abilities in the interview project are further explored.   It was found in the study that the students responded positively to communication with native English speakers and most of them felt comfortable in communicating with native speakers and regarded it as a pleasant experience.   The application of the interview project had positive effects on the development of students' cultural awareness—the interview project significantly helped the students identify and list cultural similarities and differences between their own culture and the interviewees'.

Ko (2003) aimed to find out the effect of the multimedia teaching materials— "Sesame English" on learners' English learning attitude and American cultural awareness.   Subjects were 69 second graders and 80 fourth graders from one elementary school in the Taipei City.   Questionnaires, classroom observation, and the interviews were the instruments.   The results verified the positive effect of the multimedia program "Sesame English" on learners' English learning attitude and American cultural awareness.

Tang's (2004) study found that comic strips can help facilitate students' culture learning and if students' positive attitude toward comic strip-aided cultural instruction

can affect their learning performance. Two groups of junior high second graders of similar background were treated as experimental and control group respectively; the former was instructed by way of culture relevant comic materials, and the latter, teacher's narration alone. The results indicated that comic aids contributed, to a significant degree, to students' improved performance in culture learning, and, though students' attitude toward their introduction and effects was positive, it did not significantly correlate to their English learning.

2.2.6 Summary of the section

Culture learning is a must for EFL learners despite its difficulties in language classroom. The instructional frameworks, techniques and suggestions of culture learning mentioned above can serve as basic guidelines in culture instruction. Moreover, previous studies also indicated that culture learning should be theoretically based—it requires an instructor to carefully construct a culture learning curriculum so as to render adequate and beneficial culture learning to language learners. And studies on culture teaching and English learning in Taiwan—focusing on the investigation of culture instruction nowadays in Taiwan and the application of a certain kind of teaching technique to teach culture—explicate English instructors' efforts to achieve both language and cultural goals for foreign language learning.

2.3 Low Achievers

Low achievers have been common to every educational system through history, while they, until this century, still have been given scant attention (Mandel, & Marcus, 1988). They were the unmentioned refusal of educational systems until the rise of psychological and educational testing early in the 20th century (Griffin, 1988). In elementary school, high school, or college, many students encounter some difficulties

in their academic learning.   They are really a challenge for a teacher who endeavors to help students learn well.

2.3.1 Definition of low achievers

Despite that there have been no clear-cut universal agreement in the field of education, most educators accept that low achievement refers to the marked discrepancy between predicted and actual levels of performance—the one who is not working up to potential (Lehr & Harris, 1988).   For example, many researchers decided on their choice of subjects by calculating the gap between intelligence test scores and academic achievement scores (Mandel & Marcus 1988; Krouse & Krouse, 1981; Li, 1993; Lin, 1995).   Possible labels for these students include "the disadvantaged," "underachievers," "low-performing," "slow learners" and others. (Lehr & Harris, 1988).   This definition of "low achievers" is widely adopted in the categorization of students in the studies of low achievers.

While in this study, the operational definition of low achievers was different from the conventional agreement of low achievers mentioned above, the researcher adopted Pimsleur's criterion of low achievers in 1964— a student whose grade in a foreign language is at least one grade-point lower than his average grade in other major subjects—and made some modification.   On the basis of students' English academic scores, intelligent test scores, and average scores in other major subjects, the researcher decided on the subjects whose average scores in English were below one deviation of the average but with at least one other major subject above average and normal intelligent test scores (40-90).

2.3.2 Characteristics of low achievers

Low achievers are those students who have average intellectual ability but are continually unsuccessful in their studies.   They are not sufficiently motivated to be successful in most regular programs and generally have a poor self-concept (Fitzpatrick, 1984).   Fitzpatrick (1984) found that "often these students become adept at surviving in school while contributing very little in the classroom" (p.94). Because of this, they develop marginal skills and create some discipline problems, and continually fall behind their classmates.   And even more seriously, in the end, some may even drop out of school.

Barret (1957) deemed that low achievers are worried about their own ability and thus lack the motivation to learn; therefore, they tend to give up, to draw back because of the fear of their doomed failure.   Psychologically, it indeed needs much more attention helping them walking smoothly and confidently in the learning journey.

Some domestic scholars (Hsu, 1993; Chou, 1993) all agreed that the learning inability of English low achievers is often accompanied with the feeling of frustration and even inferiority.   These learners tend to gradually give up themselves in English learning, and sometimes they even interfere with the teacher's teaching and become problems to classroom management on the account that they can not help trying to attract others' attention with some mischievous.   Thus, it really needs every teacher's attention to know more about their language learning.

2.3.3 Factors resulting in underachievement

There is no single cause accounting for the occurrence of underachievement[1]. It is a function of different factors in different students (Krouse & Krouse, 1981).

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[1] "Underachievement" refers to one's attainment failing to achieve one's potential.   "Low achievers" in this study are a group of students with underachievement.

Mandel and Marcus (1988) referred to the factors for underachievement as falling logically into four major categories: temporary, permanent, internal and external. Temporary factors can be external (e.g., teacher absence) or internal factors (e.g., a student contracts the flu and find it more difficult to concentrate). Permanent factors can also be external (e.g., attending a different school because the student's family relocates) or internal (e.g., specific learning ability or one's personality, which may inhibit or interfere with the academic performance). These two pairs factors interact with each other, as shown in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1. *General Reasons for Underachievement (with Examples)*

	Temporary Factors	Permanent Factors
External factors	Teacher absence	Change of schools
	Parent illness	Family breakup
		Death of family member
Internal Factors	Student illness	Learning disability
	Nutritional imbalance	Visual or hearing impairment
		Personality

Note. From Mandel & Marcus, 1988, p. 24.

In their review of relevant work with underachievement, Krouse and Krouse (1981) identified three major "camps" or "theories" to account for underachievement. They proposed that underachievement results from the interplay of three areas of reasons. The most distinct camp views underachievement as a result of weakness in academic skills such as reading, note-taking, exam-taking, and English pronunciation. The second camp they identified is the deficiencies in self-control skills. Examples consist of the ability to schedule time properly and self-monitoring. The third camp

is interfering affective factors: poor motivation, lack of confidence, and learning anxiety. The three perspectives cannot account for low achievement independently; the three interplays as what Krouse and Krouse (1981) described:

> Academic underachievement can best be viewed, therefore, as a complex interaction between deficits in academic skills, such as reading and mathematics, deficient self-control skills, and interfering affective factors. Since the personality dysfunction and anxiety models described above are similar in that they interfere with academic function, they can be grouped together as affective factors in underachievement. The multimodal theory, therefore, considers an interactive, three-pronged model to describe academic dysfunction. As a complex interaction, underachievement cannot be simply understood or conceptualized as resulting from any one of these three components alone; to attempt such an explanation misses the mark through naivety and oversimplification. (p.154)

McGuire & Lyons (1985) also pointed out that "underachievement" might develop from a family's inattentativeness and ineffectiveness. He ascribed the failure of one's learning to the transcontextual reasons like family, school, institution, systems, and so on.

Pimsleur (1964) conducted a study to identify the principal reasons for the students' poor foreign language performance. She pinpointed that the lack of ability to learn a foreign language cannot be equated with low intelligence. She investigated and examined the correlation among motivation, attitudes, personality, and underachievement. She found that though the three factors may, to some degree, affect low achievers' foreign language learning, they do not stand as prominent reasons for low achievers in her study. What she pointed out as the principal causes

of foreign language underachievement were lack of a coordinated foreign language program in the schools and low auditory ability on the part of the student.

There are a multiplicity of factors which may cause underachievement, and no single professional domain can deal with all of these factors.   The better understanding of the reasons for underachievement can certainly help teachers to confront the complexity of the problem of underachievement.

2.3.4 Low achievers' English learning in Taiwan

Some domestic scholars (Hsu, 1993; Chou, 1993; Fang, 1994, Chen, 2003) and in-service English teachers agree that lack of motivation to learn accounts for the reason why low achievers can not cope with English learning in spite of their normal intelligence.   The learning inability of English low achievers is often accompanied with the feeling of frustration and even inferiority.   Therefore, they tend to gradually give up themselves in English learning, and at last they even interfere the teacher's English practicing and classroom management (Hsu, 1995).   Hsu (1995) recommended that junior high school teachers make use of all kinds of techniques and strategies to enhance low achievers' English learning motivation and interest.

With scholars in Taiwan recognizing the importance of low achievers' English learning, more and more books and studies inquire deeper into the strategies and programs of assisting low achievers in language learning.   Studies such as peer tutoring (Wu, 1989; Chia, 2003), learning strategies (Kuo, 1999; Yeh, 2003), children's story books (Jiang, 2003), individual educational program (Shao, 1997), CAI (Wang, 2003) are conducted to examine their effect on low achievers' English learning.   A variety of strategies and teaching programs are also employed inside or outside the classroom by teachers to empower English low achievers.   Here the researcher selected several studies focusing on fostering low achievers' English

learning in Taiwan.

Kuo's study (1999) was to develop an English learning strategies training (ELST) program and to examine its effects on learning strategies and achievement.   Sixteen English low achievers were randomly assigned to the experiment group and control group.   The experiment group was arranged to attend twelve sessions of the ELST program.   The control group received no treatment.   The results verified the researcher's hypothesis that strategies training could significantly improve the low achievers' strategy use and English spelling scores.

In Wang's study (2003), the randomly-selected subjects, 90 senior high school low achievers, separately underwent computer assisted instruction (CAI), lecture instruction, or self-education curriculum activities for eight weeks.   Eight weeks later, he made a comparison about their performance in English vocabulary, English integrated ability with a follow-up test.   The effects of CAI were found better than those of lecture teaching, and the effects of lecture teaching were better than those of self-education.

Jiang (2003) examined the pupil's responses and learning results concerning the application of children's reading strategy.   The researcher reedited the materials for four fifth graders rated as low achievers in the subject of English.   With a qualitative case study using data such as observation, field notes, interview, and reflective notes, the application of reading in meaningful contexts was found to be able to guide the young low achievers in acquiring vocabularies and constructing sentences.

Chia (2003) investigated the effects of peer tutoring on phonics learning and English learning attitude on elementary school students with low English performance. In her study, twenty-eight fifth-grade low achievers were divided into two groups, the control group and the experimental group, and then they were asked to review phonics three times a week for six weeks in school.   Each student in the experimental group

did the review with the help of a peer of high English performance, while the low achievers in the control group review phonics by themselves.   The subjects were asked to complete five "Phonics Achievement Tests" and "English Learning Attitude Scale" before and after the experiment.   Results of the study showed that the experimental group preformed significantly better than the control group in phonics achievement tests.   There was no significant difference in English learning attitude between the two groups except for the experiment group's more active participation in class after the experiment.

Shao (1997) conducted a study about an English IEP (individual educational program) as a remedial teaching method for 18 low achievers in an English resource room of a junior high school.   She reedited teaching materials according to every subject's starting behavior in six teaching steps—diagnosis, planning of immediate instructional progress, group teaching, evaluation, going back to the mainstream and following-up.   From the investigation, Shao discovered 78% of the subjects, after the remedial instruction, regained confidence in learning English and could develop correct and positive attitude in learning the language.

2.3.5 Other treatments to low achievers' language learning

In recent years, treatments of low achievers have been an increasingly popular research topic in the classroom clinical literature.   Intervention procedures ranged from relatively simple techniques such as learning strategy teaching and making a contract for homework completion among teachers, parents, and the students to more complex approaches such as structured classrooms in which the total environment is oriented toward academic and social enhancement (via tokens, praise, time out, fines, etc.).

In addition to the cognitive treatment designed to help low achievers' language

learning, there was also psychological treatment to raise low achievers' learning abroad. Powers (1971) used strength-supportive group psychotherapy with 48 underachieving ninth grades (24 males and 24 females). The treatment was verified to be successful, since the counseling group showed significant increases in GPA and attitude improvement.

It especially draws the researcher's attention that the intervention of motivation training has elicited a series of research. Markle & Rinn (1980) conducted a study on the effects of achievement motivation training on academic performance of low achievers. Although similar to other programs focusing on achievement motivation, substantial differences exist, particularly since the program is presented in an outpatient format rather than being integrated into the classroom. The Subjects (54 students, Grade 3 to 11) in the treatment group accepted the achievement motivation training program outside the school instead of in the classroom, while the control group accepted no treatment. The finding was that most subjects in the treatment group did better in the academic GPA.

Low achievers are a group of learners in need of teachers' and researchers' more attention and involvement. There are a lot of treatments which can help low achievers to learn left unexplored. That's what the researcher in this research attempts to figure out—whether culture learning can facilitate low achievers in language learning and how the teacher can design the most appropriate culture instruction curriculum for English low achievers.

2.3.6 Summary of the section

In the section above, the introduction to low achievers and English low achievers in Taiwan was presented and the importance to help low achievers was emphasized. Besides, relevant studies on low achievers' language learning in Taiwan and in other

countries all aim to help low achievers in an effective way.   It really takes teachers'

knowledge of remedial strategies and understanding of their students to make a good

decision on how to help the low achievers successfully.

2.4 Summary

In this chapter, the researcher elaborated on the relationship among attitude,

culture instruction and low achievers via an examination of literature including

attitude toward language learning, culture learning in the classroom as well as low

achievers' studies.

The researcher made use of the literature as her background knowledge and

conducted the present study in order to verify the effects of culture learning on low

achievers' English learning attitude in junior high school.