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INFLUENCE OF SOCIOLINGUISTIC FACTORS IN SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNING

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Abstract

This paper discusses sociolinguistic factors in second language learning and the impact of social influence on learners to learn second/foreign language. The connection between the social context and second-language use and learning, which shows that the production and processing of L2 inputs in the social context in learners' second language (L2) are socially intermediated, the social and linguistic contexts affect their language uses, decisions and development, and that learner's active L2 use to interact in social contexts.

Introduction

Second-language learning study has raised as a consequence of advances in general linguistics, psycholinguistics and cognitive psychology. Language and society are inseparable as society moves with language. Sociolinguistic is a branch of linguistics and sociology which examines the individual and social variation of language (Spolsky, 2010). Sociolinguistic is a study of the relationship between language and society or the study of how social factors influence variation in language. It primarily concerned on how language is shaped by the people in a society or how an individual acquires a language and how it is used. Psychological and sociological factors play an important part in the teaching of second/foreign languages. Second language learning is the method through which individuals learn a non-native language.

Here, learning refers to the formal learning of a language in the classroom setting. Some of the factors that affect the learners while learning the language are not only psychological but social factors also. The process of second language acquisition can be influenced by several factors. Ellis

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(1994, p. 201) discusses the four social factors that have received the most attention in SLA research, which are essential for a person's degree of success in becoming a proficient L2 user. Moreover, Ellis (1994, p. 201) emphasises that these factors interact in many complex ways and that it is, therefore, difficult to single out one specific factor's influence on L2 learning. It should be recognized that it is not age, sex, social class, or ethnic identity that determine L2 proficiency, but rather the social conditions and attitudes associated with these variables. Also, the factors interact among themselves, and their effect on learning depends to a large extent on the setting. Any conclusions, therefore, need to be cautious. (Ellis, 1994, p. 211). Social factors refer to any characteristic(s) of a social community that might influence an individual's' learning of a second language, for example, age, gender, social class, attitude, culture and socio-economic status of the learner. These will determine how an individual assimilates and develops all the linguistic abilities he/she require to learn in a new language, along with many other elements.

Some of the factors investigated like below

Age

Second language learning mainly influenced by two common individual learners' differences such as age and social background. The former is usually related to the general belief that says that the children/younger are better at language acquisition/learning than adults, in this context Saddeghi (2013) says that the premature age has an impact on the rate of learning and the final performance level. There are two basic different views concerning the age issue according to Saddeghi (2013). A researcher like Khalifa (2012) also added that age affects EFL learning because early exposure to language instructions always resulted in better performance. Similarly, he quoted Snow (1993) and Taylor (1990), who did studies that, showed that the earlier the first language learning, the better the second language, and that the greater learning was acquired by students who began to learn English at the age of 5 or 6. An old maxim says, "It's difficult to teach an old dog new tricks," or "an old parrot doesn't learn how to speak." As the belief seems to be supported by certain reasons.

As stated in O'Grady (1997), according to Archibald, people start learning a second and foreign language in various situations in their life. In this idea, the critical period hypothesis which O'Grady points out as one of the most fascinating questions when studying language learning since he considers that linguistic development is possible if people are exposed to language during a given period. Thus, it is a concept that cannot be taken apart. Starting from his / her language instruction at a young age, researchers believe that phonological, as well as grammatical aspects, can be compromised. Therefore; it is obvious that the age factor plays a vital role in language learning. It must be observed that each age/year has a certain number of advantages and disadvantages while learning the language. In short, younger days are better at language learning, but adolescents are better at language learning rules and systems.

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Socioeconomic Context/Social Background

The social background is another important factor in second language learning similar to age. Language learning occurs in a different social context. The social class of the individual is a combination of income, level of education and occupation. It's generally divided into four groups: lower-class, working-class, lower middle class and upper-middle class. Most studies indicate that L2 is less successful in the case of young children from lower socio-economic groups than in higher groups. It is just not because of socio-economic class per se, but through the exposure of the world that the social class may have. According to William and Burden (1997) cited by Pishghadam (2011), the influence of environs on learning a language is considerable because it enables individuals to learn, how to learn and to develop as fully integrated learners. Learner's access to different cultural affluence such as the Internet, computers, pictures, paintings, books and dictionaries (Cultural affluence), and learners´ relationships with teachers, parents, siblings, and peers (Social affluence) may have a profound influence upon whether, what and how an individual learns a language.

He also considers the relationship between social class, success and different capitals/resources learners possess. Similarly, it has been said that ESL students may present different degrees of eagerness to learn English depending on the cultural and social background they have been exposed to, which is supported by Pavlenko (2002) when he states that the social context is directly involved in setting positive or negative conditions for L2 learning.

Arikan (2011) explains how it has been shown that students with higher socioeconomic status demonstrate higher academic achievement and enroll in elite universities more than their lower-income peers. As people with good salaries can afford educational expenses for them and their kids and can able to access to resources have a considerable impact on the acquisition of value systems as much as on academic achievement.

Gender

Trudgill claims that because women are more status-conscious, they are more likely to use prestigious speech forms compared to men. Trudgill clarifies two contradictory principles"1. Based on the research by Batters (1986) in a British study of second-year L2 learners who found that girls' attitudes toward classroom activities vary from those of boys. The girls in the classroom were more engaged in the English subject and had a greater desire to communicate with native speakers compared to the boys. On the other hand, the boys were more interested in and engaged in L2 speaking tasks.

Ethnicity

Ethnicity is defined as the fact of belonging to a particular group in terms of culture,practices, beliefs and/or religion. According to Trofimovich &Turuséva (2015),"[e]thnic identity refers to the subjective experience embracing the feelings, experiences, and behaviours through which people position their membership in a single or multiple ethnic groups". Ellis (1994) states that the relationship between the ethnic group and the target language has a great impact on

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L2 learning. High achievement levels can be acquired if the cultures of the native and the target language are close, whereas a large distance between the cultures of the native and the target language will make second language learning difficult for the learner. Ellis(1994) added that "[t]he attitudes that learners hold towards the learning of a particularL2 reflect the intersection of their views about their own ethnic identity and those about the target language culture.

Language attitudes

Learners' attitude towards the learner, the peer group, the school, the neighborhood, and society at great can have both positive and negative impact on the second language learning process. Teachers and students must examine and comprehend these attitudes. Students learn and acquire a language through social interaction; however, sometimes, as it is stated by Gholami, the significance of the social context is mostly ignored in EFL countries since their social context is missing. The author also states that students of a foreign language acquire it through social interaction.

Conclusion

Although this paper has been based on the nature of second language learning from a social factor viewpoint, language, learner and the learning process, it is important to stress that second language learning is often closely associated with psychology, cognitive learning and education. The mental processes involved in language acquisition, and how they can explain the nature of learners' language knowledge.

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