

The Cultural Effects of Studying a Foreign Language on Learners' Behaviours

الآثار الثقافية لدراسة لغة أجنبية على سلوكيات المتعلمين

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Abstract:

This article goes beyond the realms of language study to inquire into the profound impact of culture on the actions of learners as they start to acquire a new tongue. Central to this work is the intriguing investigation of "otherness" within the framework of FL teaching, as well as the ever-changing process of identity construction. Therefore, this article's goal is to provide an interpretation of how cultural factors impact and transform the ways in which learners interact, view the world, and grow. Through an examination of cultural influence, this paper seeks to shed light on the metamorphosis that students undergo as they go from self-discovery to a full appreciation of "otherness."

Keywords: Identity; Otherness; Language; Culture; Interculturality.

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ملخص :

يهدف هذا المقال الى استكشاف العلاقات المعقدة الموجودة بين الثقافة والجوانب المختلفة لتعليم وتعلم اللغات الأجنبية. بعيداً عن المجالات التقليدية لتعلم اللغة، تحاول هذه الورقة البحث في التأثير الكبير للثقافة على سلوكيات المتعلمين عند اكتسابهم لغة مستهدفة، سواء كانت الإنجليزية أو أي لغة أجنبية أخرى. إن العملية الديناميكية لتشكيل الهوية والاستكشاف الرائع لفكرة "الآخر" في سياق تعليم اللغة الأجنبية هي جوهر هذا العمل. وبالتالي، فإن الغرض من هذه المقالة هو تفسير كيفية تأثير الثقافة وتغييرها في تفاعلات المتعلمين ووجهات نظرهم وتطوراتهم. تحاول هذه الورقة التفاوض على التضاريس المعقدة للتأثير الثقافي، وتوضيح العملية التحويلية التي يمر بها المتعلمون من تحديد هويتهم إلى تقدير ثراء "الآخر".

كلمات مفتاحية: الهوية، الأخرية، اللغة، الثقافة، التداخل الثقافي.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The importance of learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL) has grown substantially in today's interconnected world. Due to its widespread recognition as the language of business, education, and communication, English has grown increasingly important. Learning English may be a challenging process for persons from diverse cultural backgrounds since it requires them to navigate not only their own cultural identity but also the construction of a new linguistic one. The central focus of this

piece is the transition from a robust cultural identification to a fresh perspective on otherness. This view holds that the ever-changing dynamics of second language acquisition are profoundly affected by the cultural elements inherent in both the learner's original and target languages.

Also, knowing how language, culture, and identity all work together is a challenging but necessary aspect of learning a new language. Academics have known for a long time that learning a language is more than just a linguistic exercise; it influences culture and identity. As they engage with a foreign language, people must also learn to navigate the cultural factors inherent to that language. Language, culture, and identity all interact in complex ways that impact how students see themselves and others in the classroom.

2. Learning a new language and my cultural identity

Cultural identity has a significant role in the process of second language acquisition. When people desire to communicate with others from other backgrounds, they often choose to learn a new language. This method emphasizes not only the acquisition of linguistic competence but also the understanding of linguistic context and cultural peculiarities (Norton, 2013). An individual's cultural identity may be influenced by their exposure to the many Hispanic cultures, for instance, as a result of studying Spanish.

Learning a new language and developing one's sense of cultural identity are two sides of the same coin. The converse is also true: one's cultural identity can be impacted by learning a new language. A person's cultural identity, which encompasses

their ancestry, beliefs, and values, might impact their motivation to learn a new language and the way they go about doing so (Pavlenko, 2008). Therefore, the desire to communicate across cultural barriers or establish a connection to one's cultural history is a strong predictor of language acquisition success.

Learning a new language and developing a sense of cultural identity are two sides of the same coin when considering bilingualism and multilingualism. When speaking a different language, people who are multilingual often assume different cultural personas (Kanno & Norton, 2003). Bilingual and multilingual people, who often find themselves adapting their sense of self to new linguistic and cultural contexts, are prime examples of how identity can be fluid and changeable.

Thus, the junction of cultural identification and language acquisition is also present in the domains of language revival and preservation. One example is the importance of indigenous languages to indigenous peoples' cultural heritage (McCarty, Romero, & Zepeda, 2006). Because of the inseparable nature of language and culture, language revitalization programs often incorporate both language instruction and the dissemination of traditional practices.

3. The Role of Culture in Foreign Language Acquisition

Culture and language development are so interdependent that they influence one another and the way we learn. Learning a new language is more than just memorizing words and phrases; it also necessitates investigating cultural quirks that permeate everyday speech (Smith, 2018). The cultural context in which a language is used shapes both its linguistic features and its pragmatic use in different social and cultural contexts.

Beyond just memorizing grammar and vocabulary, learning a new language also necessitates delving into the cultural nuances that influence language use. The key to effective language acquisition is in comprehending this symbiotic relationship. Culture is reflected in language, according to Johnson (2017). Cultural factors are more than just another consideration while learning a language; they are the very essence of what makes a language meaningful.

One of the main tenets of the theory of second language acquisition is the idea of cultural immersion. Going beyond merely linguistic competence, it plays a key role in investigating the cultural norms and contextual subtleties that are intrinsic to the language being learned (Gomez, 2019). Therefore, students can do more than just learn words and phrases when they immerse themselves in a culture; they can also pick up on the ethos, values, and social components of the language. For example, according to Harris (2020), it's all about delving into the core of a language and how it's expressed within its cultural context.

Therefore, one of the most important aspects of learning a new language is learning to adapt to and understand different cultures. Different people from different cultures have different perspectives on language and its architecture. Cultural references and slang can be difficult for pupils from different cultural backgrounds to understand, according to Li and Patel (2018). Learners need to adjust their linguistic sensibilities to the cultural context if they want to master the intricate dance that is the relationship between culture and language comprehension.

4. Moving Beyond Self-Assignment to Exploring Otherness

As a social construction, a medium of communication, and a repository of accumulated knowledge, language is intrinsically linked to the culture it represents. Learners who take the time to recognize cultural diversity in their own context are better able to communicate effectively and build a meaningful sense of self in relation to others. The emergence of otherness is one of the many ways in which the two-interdependent cultural and linguistic systems interact.

Smith (2020) argues that shedding one's own identity and embracing one's otherness is a crucial component of language acquisition. Many people find that they undergo a metamorphosis as a result of their language learning journey. For a while, they felt most at home in their native tongue and culture. However, as individuals gain fluency in the foreign language, they start to merge their old self with the new language and culture they are studying. This shift involves numerous stages:

4.1 Keeping One's Identity Safe

At first, whether intentionally or not, people learning a new language may try to hold on to who they are and what they know. They may be hesitant to fully immerse themselves in the other culture and language if they are worried about losing their own identity.

4.2 Adapting One's Identity

As their language skills improve, students adapt to their new cultural and linguistic environments. Even though they retain their unique individuality, they begin to adopt features of the host culture.

4.3 The Investigation of Otherness

People immerse themselves further in the target culture and language during this stage. They could start to embrace some aspects of the foreign culture and even start to identify with it. Simultaneously, they may also identify as "other" from their native culture.

4.4 Unique Combination

Eventually, some students of a foreign language find that they like both their native culture and the culture of the language they are studying. Their mixed heritage and fluency in more than one language are evident in their unique hybrid identity.

4.5 Building One's Identity Through Language Study

When students immerse themselves in the process of learning a new language, they not only improve their language skills but also their sense of self. When people engage with a new culture and language, they often find themselves negotiating their identities in relation to the linguistic group. The learner's present self and the self-image that is nurtured by language acquisition engage in a dynamic interplay throughout this process. One important outcome of learning a second language is the development of a multicultural and bilingual identity.

The act of acquiring a new language is intrinsically linked to the maturation of an individual's sense of self, making second language learning an immensely formative experience. This project is about more than just schoolwork. Learning a new language, says Norton (2000), makes you rethink who you are. Learning a new language is like balancing on a tightrope: you

have to be true to who you are while also expanding your vocabulary and understanding different cultures.

There is a two-way street between identity and language. Pavlenko and Blackledge (2004) argue that language serves as both a means of communication and a platform for the construction and expression of individual identities. As they immerse themselves in a new language, students are continually negotiating the boundaries between their own identity and the one that the language is helping to form. The intricate process of developing one's identity includes this interaction.

A bilingual identity can be greatly shaped by the process of learning a second language. Learning a second language, argues Block (2007), helps students become more well-rounded individuals by exposing them to different ways of thinking about language and culture. Embracing the richness that comes with expressing oneself across many linguistic and cultural lenses, learners transcend the limitations of a single identity as they embark on their language journey.

The classroom becomes an interactive stage where students can forge their own identities via negotiation and discovery. Language classrooms, according to Norton and Toohey (2001), are crucial because they provide an environment where students interact with one another, their instructors, and cultural artifacts. In addition to shaping their language abilities, these interactions shape how students see themselves and the world around them. Consequently, the classroom serves as an ever-changing arena for the exploration and formation of one's identity.

6. Expert Opinions on Language, Culture, and Identity

When studying a new language, experts in the subject say it's crucial to understand the interconnected nature of culture, language, and identity. Academics Adrian Holliday and Michael Byram have made significant contributions to theoretical frameworks that investigate these connections. Byram's model of international communicative competence and Holliday's concept of intercultural awareness both shed light on the complexities of cultural identification that language learners may face in the classroom.

In the academic world, people generally agree that language is more than that—it reflects the intricate relationships between culture and identity. Hall argues that language serves as a vehicle for the transmission of cultural identity and values (1996). This theory holds that scholars can gain a unique perspective by analyzing linguistic intricacies, which in turn allow them to probe the complex web of cultural and individual identity.

Academic perspectives stress the importance of the relationship between language and culture. Kramsch (1998) argues that cultural factors provide the linguistic framework within which pragmatics, syntax, and vocabulary all operate. This perspective stresses the importance of understanding a language's cultural background for a complete grasp of that language and the inseparable bond between language and culture.

Language plays a significant role in the complex process of identity formation, which academics study. In addition to being a tool for communication, language is also a powerful tool for constructing and negotiating one's identity (Norton, 2013). Academic discussions on language and identity have acknowledged the dynamic nature of this relationship and have placed an emphasis on the power of language to shape both internal and external perceptions of an individual.

Acknowledging the deep and multidimensional essence of identity, scholarly discourse expands within multilingual environments. People who are multilingual are always negotiating their identity, claims Pavlenko (2008). The adoption of numerous languages and linguistic repertoires challenges traditional notions of a single, stable identity and helps to construct identities that are complex and flexible.

7. Cultural Immersion as a Means of Language Acquisition

Cultural immersion, in which pupils are exposed to the numerous beliefs, social norms, and rituals associated with the language they are learning, is an essential part of language acquisition (Gardner, 2016). By delving into the cultural context of a language, learners gain a more profound understanding of how language is employed to convey cultural values, societal standards, and historical perspectives. This immersive experience enhances language ability by providing a holistic view of language as a cultural organism.

How people comprehend and utilize language is greatly affected by cultural disparities. According to Chen and Lee (2020), students from different cultural backgrounds may bring unique perspectives to the process of learning a new language,

shaped by their own home languages and cultural norms. Cultural variations impact not only the learner's command of the target language but also their capacity to understand and use its idioms, metaphors, and cultural references.

According to Kramsch (2019), cultural competency is a crucial concept for achieving true language proficiency. Learners of a language who are culturally competent demonstrate not just fluency but also an understanding of the linguistic and social implications of their actions in a range of cultural settings. By adding cultural competency into language instruction, teachers play a crucial role in developing students who are both culturally sensitive and globally aware.

8. Obstacles Facing Intercultural Communication

Language, communication, custom, and cultural norm differences are the root causes of many of the difficulties that might arise in cross-cultural interactions. Interactions like these have the potential to cause misunderstandings, false assumptions, and even violence amongst groups with diverse cultural origins. It may also be challenging to collaborate and communicate clearly if there is a clash of ideas and worldviews. To be sure, challenges can be opportunities for growth, for more cultural awareness, and for better intercultural communication skills; these things, in turn, can lead to more meaningful and fruitful cross-cultural contacts.

Johnson, L. B., and Smith, J. A. (2023) assert that there are many challenges associated with intercultural contacts in today's worldwide culture. Cultural differences, including differences in language, communication styles, attitudes, and worldviews, are

major contributors to these problems. People are often compelled to navigate unfamiliar cultural terrain as a consequence of these encounters, which can lead to misunderstandings, arguments, and misinterpretation. Keep in mind, though, that despite the challenges, there are unique opportunities for personal and organizational growth. By overcoming these obstacles and developing intercultural competence, individuals can promote effective communication in a diverse setting, increase cross-cultural understanding, and break down cultural boundaries.

Brown and Lee (2022), believe that Learners of English as a foreign language may face significant cultural obstacles when acquiring the language. Understanding the cultural peculiarities and context-specific meanings embedded in language use is just as challenging as mastering grammar and vocabulary. As an example, owing to their vast cultural differences, EFL learners may struggle with idioms, humor, and body language. In addition, cultural variations in communication standards and behaviors can lead to misunderstandings and ineffective communication. Truthful self-expression and social engagement in English-speaking environments may be impacted by these cultural differences for language learners. The following three features typically emerge as a result of learners' challenges:

8.1 Discrimination

It is a way of thinking that is characterized by prejudice and bias towards individuals or groups based on perceived characteristics including race, gender, ethnicity, nationality, or ethnic background. A person's biases can lead to unfair treatment, discrimination, and stereotyping. In order to fight prejudice, it is essential to promote equality and openness via

teaching, learning, and being sensitive to different cultures (Jones, R.S. 2022).

8.2 Deculturation

Deculturation refers to the process by which an individual or group loses touch with their cultural background and identity. It occurs when the values, traditions, and customs of one culture are gradually eroded or replaced by those of another, either because of internal conflicts or external influences. Loss of cultural identity and subsequent crises of self-esteem can be outcomes of cultural assimilation or displacement (Smith, L. K. 2023).

8.3 Ethnocentrism

Garcia (2021) claims that ethnocentrism was defined as the tendency to regard one's own cultural or ethnic group as more superior to other civilizations or as the standard by which all other cultures are evaluated. Bias, prejudice, and negative views of other cultures are common outcomes. To conquer ethnocentrism, one must be culturally informed, accepting of diversity, and cognizant of the fact that no culture is inherently superior to any other.

9. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, a difficult and important aspect of language training is the influence of cultural influences on the behavior of students studying English as a second language. Culture has an effect on how people use language, which in turn impacts how people think, feel, and express themselves. Students' strategies, challenges, and overall proficiency in the target language are all

impacted. Recognizing the cultural aspect of language acquisition is essential for both students and teachers to create a more inclusive and comprehensive approach to language instruction. By embracing cultural variance, building cultural awareness, and creating intercultural competency, language learners can more successfully navigate the barriers of language learning. This paves the way for deeper global understanding and fruitful cross-cultural dialogue. Learning is improved and global citizenship is fostered when language and culture are intertwined in this manner.

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