



The Impact of Social Identity and Culture on Second Language Learning: A Sociolinguistic Perspective

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Abstract. Taking a sociolinguistic stance, the current study was an attempt to find out the role of social identity and culture on second language acquisition (SLA) among language learners. In this study, some speculations and arguments addressing the definition of social identity and culture, their role, and the value of instructing them in SLA were examined. Additionally, it offered some instructional techniques for teaching SLA/FLA students about culture acquisition. Based on the evidence gathered, it was determined that learning a second or foreign language requires more than just mastering the linguistic structures and elements; it also necessitates learning about the social identity and culture of the target country. It was also discovered that social identity, culture, and language are so intricately entwined in a society that separating them would probably send the other to hell. Without having a thorough understanding of the language's identity and culture, a learner cannot fully master the language. In addition, it is impractical for students who try to abandon their mother tongues or cultures during the SLA/FLA process, which results in the disappearance of their social identities.

Keywords: Culture; Social Identity; Sociolinguistics; SLA.

Introduction





According to the social identity theory (SIT), categorization, affective components, and community memberships are all intertwined to create a sense of belonging to a particular community. People feel at ease when they belong to a community, which can have positive effects on communication with other members, such as agreement and information sharing (Moerman, 1993). Furthermore, the related idea of social identity can help us recognize and steer clear of undesirable outcomes in the real world, including phenomena like peer pressure, poor decision-making, and hostility between communities. These are some of the reasons, according to Scollon and Scollon (2000), why academics like Myron and Koester have made their arguments. (2010) have looked into identity models as a strategy to lessen undesirable outcomes, like intercommunity tendencies like the widespread in-community identity model. Because of this, this idea is increasingly common in our understanding of the dynamics and effects of multicultural groups.

Tajfel proposed one of the key theories of social identity in 1974. He maintained that identity is derived from community membership. The concept of identity drew the attention of the researchers during the twentieth century. Nonetheless, these researchers were restricted to the theorists in the fields of psychology and social science. It was with the beginning of the third millennium, when the concept of identity entered into the realm of language teaching and learning (Wanglifei, 2000). In the educational environments, teachers' role identity consists of teachers' beliefs, values, and feelings about different aspects of instruction and the very state of being an instructor. Researchers have repeatedly noted that identity is not a constant and everlasting concept. Rather, it is fluid and can be influenced by different variables. When people enlarge their social circle or change the environments in which they live and work they keep developing and changing to construct their identities. This issue, refers to the dialogic nature of identity. In other words, people's identity is defined and modified by the identities of the new persons or groups to which they get connected (Wenger, 1998). The dialogic nature of identity, as being explained in the previous sentences, have been explored and examined by many scholars. Identity, according to Burns and Richards (2009), "reflects how individuals see themselves and how they enact their roles within different settings" (p. 5). in case of teachers, it is important to note that while their identity can be modified by different variables around them, they are also able to modify and change the identity of their students. Thus, exploring teachers' identity, especially in the areas which are under-





researched, could have significant benefits for the all participants in the processes of learning and teaching.

Due to the importance of this concept in people's professional lives, identity is widely acknowledged as a key component in initiatives for teacher education (Yazan, 2017). It is now generally acknowledged that having a thorough understanding of identity can have important repercussions on the instructional strategies and classroom activities used by teachers (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009). It is challenging to define, conceive of, or even research identity because it is believed to be a dynamic multifaceted 'process' rather than a unified and stable concept. Scholars favored to look at this concept from a variety of perspectives due to its complexity. Actually, since its significance in the area of Second Learning (SLL) was periodically acknowledged, identity has been receiving more attention. SLL is not just the purchase of the most recent, but a fight between concrete, socially constructed, and persistently placed beings to occasionally participate in the symbolically mediated life world of a different culture. SLL involves a complex methodology of negotiating identities, cultures, and power relations and goes beyond simply gathering predetermined linguistic information. Norton (2000) created a thorough theory of identity that incorporates the language learner and the language- learning context while taking into account the conventional SLL theories. To seek guidance from "how someone understands his or her relationship to the world, but that relationship is formed across time and space, and also the manner that person understands prospects for the long term," she reintroduced the term "social identity" within the field of SLL. Jenkins' (2008) concept of social identity as a social constructionist does not (2000). In line with Norton (2000), language learners cannot "be defined unproblematically as motivated or unmotivated, introverted or extroverted, inhibited or uninhibited, as all these 'affective factors are frequently socially constructed in inequitable relations of power, changing over time and space, and possibly coexisting in contradictory ways in a single individual". (p. 5). It can be seen that identity in the context of SLL has been conceptualized in a way that partially echoes Jenkins' identity theory, but this is due to the poststructuralist viewpoints' sensitivity to power relations and a new level of purposefulness attached to the engagement with attainable power disparities, context-dependent learning, and future prospects. A poststructuralist approach may also be useful for researchers studying the relationship between identity and SLL, according to Block (2007). This allows them to see the nuances of the learning strategy beyond the simple acquisition of linguistic skills.





Social identity is described by Tajfel (1974) According to p. 69, this is "that aspect of an individual's self-concept that results from his knowledge of his membership in a social community (or communities), as well as the emotional significance attached to that membership" Since people's identities are derived from their affiliations with in-communities, Tajfel claims, they may decide to change their community membership if their current one does not sufficiently satisfy the aspects of their social identity that they find positive. However, it may not always be possible to alter community membership and, in turn, social identity to some extent, leaving people with only two choices: changing their perception of the characteristics of their in-community to see them in a more positive light or taking social action to bring about change. However, Tajfel does not clarify how to carry out this.

In their research, Le Page et al. (1985) explored the idea that each speech act can be viewed as an act of identity in a multidimensional space. They claimed that each person develops their own linguistic system, either to distinguish or distance themselves from the community or communities with which they occasionally wish to identify. Age, region, class, and sex are four categories that can be used to roughly classify people; each of these factors has an impact on language. Since it can indicate a person's decision to belong to a particular community or communities and be viewed as an act of identity to that community or communities, language becomes a crucial dimension. But before social identity theory's insights can truly benefit contemporary organizations, it is important to comprehend how this idea is perceived in various cultural contexts. For instance, Ashforth and Mael(1989) have long observed that understanding someone's social identity requires more information than simply establishing whether they identify with a certain category (such as an organization, a religion, their gender, etc.); rather, this information should also be gathered to establish how strongly the identification is held. Hopkins and Reicher (2011) emphasize the role of social identities in guiding appropriate behavior. They argue that depending on the social context, these behaviors can be shaped in a variety of ways. The assumption that identity develops differently across cultures is based on the knowledge that people from all over the world have different cultural orientations with regard to how they view power and how they identify with their communities (Hofstede, 1991).

Social Identity and Culture in Sociolinguistic Studies





Social identity is still gaining ground in research and practice despite the theoretical and structural inconsistencies. A recent Even SIT was used in a meta-analysis of identities and working hours (Ng & Feldman, 2008). For instance, recent studies have emphasized SIT as a potential technique for integrating frameworks, such as the various yet related disciplines of diversity and cross-cultural work psychology (Ferdman & Sagiv, 2012). Understanding this concept's cross-cultural function and operationalization in greater depth is necessary given its significance. As was already mentioned, SIT refers to one's sense of belonging to a community. Additionally, social identity has been identified as one of the fundamental concepts for understanding intercommunity relations. Collective identity is another name for social identity. community identity (Ashforth & Mael, 1989) or Ashmore et al. (2004). It is important to distinguish this idea from concepts like loyalty, individual loyalty, or even group self-esteem. When it comes to how one interacts with other people, social identity and personal identity are not the same thing (Hogg, 2001). According to Allen & Meyer (1990), commitment is frequently thought of in terms of its affective, continuance, and normative components, and individual commitment to upholding a positive perception of his or her community is the only source of collective self-esteem (Swann et al., 2009). Instead of community identification, the individual is the target of personal identity.(s) (Crocker & Luhtanen, 1990).

Contrarily, social identity refers to how people define themselves in light of their affiliations with particular communities (Hogg & Williams, 2000). The need for self-improvement and the desire to lessen uncertainty regarding other people's thoughts, feelings, and behavior are what motivate people to join communities (Hogg & Terry, 2000). In addition to social categorization theory (Turner, 1982) and social identity theory (Tajfel, 1978), the similarity/attraction paradigm (Byrne, 1971) is based on the idea that people are drawn to others who are like them, which results in a greater sense of belonging to the community. Because they are seen as being more predictable, people seek out encounters with those who are similar to them, which is the foundation for the development of in-communities and out communities. (Gerard & Hoyt, 1974). When two people have more in common than not, people are more attracted to them and give them higher ratings.

When teams are culturally diverse, the tendency for members of similar communities to form closer bonds with one another poses a serious threat. According to their correlated homogeneous attributes, which are referred to in the literature as fault lines, individuals may produce fictitious divisions (Lau





& Murnighan, 1998). Favoritism toward members of one's sub- community, particularly when the divide is sharp, is linked to the formation of fault lines (Thatcher & Patel, 2011). Therefore, diversity is likely to highlight differences when they become a bigger problem in pluralistic societies. In addition to the diversity found within communities, people

have access to a wide variety of social affiliations. These societies might then frequently experience conflict between communities. This is because of how people interact with one another; for instance, assimilation may be preferred by members of the majority community more so than by members of minority communities.

Furthermore, as employees from various cultures are forced to work together due to globalization, these kinds of differences will become more and more significant in today's society. This has caused people to worry about resolving intercommunity conflict. For instance, earlier studies found that occurred when the significance of the superordinate community was highlighted by the context rather than the sub-communities, teams were more likely to consider and use the knowledge of a previous out community member (Argote, & Levine, 2005). Various identities, such as team and professional identities, further moderate the relationship between diversity and effectiveness.

Along with these findings emphasizing the importance of social identity, it is also important to consider the level of social identity in recently formed teams. Depending on how this changes, a person's perception of resources may change. As an illustration, teams that interacted briefly before the task performed worse than teams that worked alone or without any prior team interaction (Cleveland et al. 2011). Social identities, a key component of social capital, are the foundation of effective social networks (Clopton & Finch, 2010). As a result, social identities can have a wide range of effects and act as a mechanism to account for significant professional outcomes. How multiple identities interact is a crucial unresolved issue. Numerous scenarios can arise as a result of the expansion of social connections and the possibility of interdependence. For instance, interracial dating and marriage were already commonplace more than ten years ago. Thanks to technology people now have access to cultures they did not have before. In order to account for the variety of possible identity options, Brewer and colleagues have started to conceptualize cultural identity in terms of its complexity. for instance, Roccas & Brewer, 2002. They gauge how much identities overlap rather than treating social identity as a singular concept. Similar to this, Chao and Moon (2005)





asserted that culture depends on context and that particular aspects of a person's identity (i.e., cultural tiles) will be activated based on the circumstance. As a result, we are starting to look into the intricate and dynamic phenomenon of multiple identities and moving away from the idea that social identity is a static concept. Identity might no longer be as reliable as it once was. But this strategy is still in its early stages.

According to the sociolinguistics perspective, The language, religion, cuisine, social mores, music, and visual and performing arts of a community define its culture. Like other countries with large immigrant populations, the United States, with its many communities, has an impact on its culture. People frequently view culture as a repository of knowledge they have about a particular society. This body of knowledge can be viewed from a variety of angles, such as knowledge about artistic works produced by people from various cultures, knowledge about organizations and locations, knowledge about holidays and symbols, or knowledge about lifestyles. This aspect of culture can also be thought of in terms of information, and culture can be taught to students as if it were a set of understandable rules. This knowledge-based perspective of culture frequently manifests itself in language teaching and learning as the dissemination of knowledge about a foreign nation, its citizens, its institutions, and so forth. But culture is not, rather than just a body of information, but rather a way of life and a way of exchanging shared meanings. The degree to which students are familiar with or aware of the target culture is referred to as their level of knowledge.

The idea of culture should be understood at the outset as a collection of learned behaviors shared by a specific human society. These actions and behaviors are available as a component of socialization in the form of templates that mold and reformulate behaviors and consciousness within a human society over the course of generations and time. So learning and culture are intimately related, and all learned behavior reflects culture. Because it allows cultures to be passed from one community and generation to the next, language is a crucial element of culture. However, regular, formal "transmission of information regarding the people of the target community or country" is not the same as teaching culture, despite the fact that this kind of knowledge is a crucial component" in formal language curricula (Nostrand, 1967; p. 44 Culture is a process of building intercultural competence rather than merely a repository of knowledge and experiences to which one can, if necessary, turn. Intercultural competence,





according to Rathje (2007), is the ability to communicate effectively with people from other cultures in a way that enables one to perceive and comprehend those people's thoughts, feelings, and behaviors without harboring any prejudices regarding race, religion, or social class. According to this definition, the term "intercultural competence" conjures up a variety of associations, including intercultural communicative competence (Simons, 2010). The ability to communicate effectively, or the power index of a language, also contributes to the ability to "cope with different cultures.. pay attention to differences in culture, detect them and react on them in an adequate way on the daily work floor" (Simons, 2010, p. 3).

Conclusion

Interactional sociolinguists like Gumperz focus on social identity in their research (1970, 1982) and Heller (1982, 1987, 1988) emphasize language.

For them, " Language plays a significant role in the establishment and maintenance of social identity and ethnicity" (Gumperz & CookGumperz, 1982, p. 7) is true. By conducting research on specific speech events, they looked into how speakers' choices of linguistic categories like phonology, morphology, syntax, and lexis relate to the social context. Additionally, they looked for evidence of code switching, To determine when and with whom code switching occursas "linguistic alternates within the repertoire serve to symbolize the various social identities which members may assume," either between languages or between dialects of the same language," (Blom & Gumperz, 1972, p. 421). The language of the majority community is frequently the "they code" language, whereas the language of the minority community is frequently the "Language is something that we code," according to Gumperz (1982, p. 66), and changing our code can indicate different community identities and memberships. Code switching, in the words of Gumperz (1970), is meaningful when viewed in the context of conversation and serves "definite and clearly understandable communicative ends" (p. 9).

One of the most important aspects of culture is the way in which people communicate through language in different contexts and situations, which is a significant and essential component of human society. For a variety of reasons, including for academic and professional purposes, they often learn more than one language. Students and professionals from Pakistan and Iran frequently choose to study a foreign language in order to fulfill their communicative and practical needs. However, because English is still taught the conventional way in schools, they lack proficiency in cross- cultural communication. The





pedagogical methods and required textbooks do little to aid students in acquiring the ability to communicate in language in context. Therefore, This assignment study identifies issues with using English as a language of instruction and offers recommendations for how to successfully incorporate cross-cultural awareness into language teaching

programs. Research on intercultural communication emphasizes the importance of cultural sensitivity in courses teaching English as a second language. Students are given an equal number of opportunities to practice speaking and listening through the teaching strategies. It also promotes cultural attitudes and behaviors that are appropriate for learning to speak English as a foreign language. The use of communication techniques also promotes social skills by serving as an example of cross-cultural communication behavior. Finally, through engaging classroom activities, students can communicate meaning, expand their vocabulary, increase their grammatical accuracy, and improve their communicative competence. Numerous research results provide useful guidance on how teachers can incorporate intercultural components into language instruction. Considering that English is widely used To reach the highest level of intercultural communicative competence as a tool or medium, it is crucial to incorporate cognitive, affective, and behavioral patterns of learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL). As a result, all intercultural communication traits must be included in English Language Teaching (ELT) programs.

One implication of the current study addresses ELT/EFL teachers and researchers. Teachers initially experience a sense of conflict during their profession. As English instructors they would have social identity roles, which certainly affect learners' roles. Some teachers feel disappointed at this stage. Thus, they may decide to give up instruction. Nonetheless, they should pay attention to the vast possibilities, which are offered by instruction. Along that, they should be cognizant of keeping their social identity roles solid and unchangeable. Another implication for syllabus and curriculum designers to take into account the importance of social identity and culture in textbooks and representations of these concepts in programs.

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