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**Perspective on Second Language Teaching –
A Complex Socio-Cultural Phenomenon**

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Abstract

The Second language learning, which is associated with Teaching, Development and Instructions, is a complex socio-cultural phenomenon with different variables concerning the psychological factors of the learners and the socio-cultural elements of the contexts .An interactional approach to second language learning can ensure that a social perspective of second language development and instruction contributes having a positive effect on the nature and quality of language learning, which activates the autonomous learning motivation and creates diversity in the learning atmosphere. Recently research on developing socio-cultural and linguistic competence simultaneously in the language classroom is gaining increasing attention from English Foreign Language practitioners & curriculum designers. The understanding of language as a social phenomenon has increased greatly because of language teaching classrooms are diversified with learners, teachers, institutions, cultures, contexts and pedagogies.

Consensus has been formed that interactions between teachers and learners in the learning processes have an effect on the nature and quality of language learning, and that “no language teaching and learning takes place in a classroom which is isolated from the world of experiences and personal engagements and investments of learners outside the classroom itself”. The environment in which a learner operates contains very rich resources of language. Therefore; there is need for exploring the potentials of grammatical structure, meaning, varieties and overall assimilations of stated features into language development.

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Introduction

Sociolinguistics, which concerns “the field that studies the relation between language and society, between the uses of language and the social structures in which the users of language live” examines how social issues affect language use in a particular society, how the same language varies from different variables as well as how particular cultures prefer some kinds of language over others. Sociolinguistics also explores how language is used in face-to-face communication and interaction.

Socio-cultural Perspectives on Language Learning: A Theoretical Background

Languages are learned in social contexts because language is a bonding component of the social mechanism. There is a strong influence from social aspects concerned with the special relation of culture, family background and learner. Recent theoretical research on second language learning of any kind taking place in a social context includes components of social integration and sufficient contacts with the second language group and of foundations in socio-cultural theory and ethnographic practice. Social factors are therefore, assumed to influence second language learning in two essential ways the social provision of language learning situations and opportunities as well as the consistent increasing of intrapersonal variation.

Sociolinguistic View vis-a-vis Interaction View

The sociolinguistic view of second language development is strongly in harmony with the interaction view held by some psychologists, which “represent a wide range of theories about the relative contributions of innate structures of the human mind and the environment which provides the samples of the language to be learned”. While the Swiss psychologist Piaget argued that learners had acquired language through physical interaction with the environment, the psychologist Vygotsky (1978) held that thought was essentially internalized speech and speech emerged in social interaction.

Similarly, as Ellis (1994) suggests the understanding of how interactional modifications affect the comprehensibility of texts; Evelyn Hatch (1992), Teresa Pica (1994) and Michael Long (1983) contend that much second language acquisition takes place through conversational interaction with regard to propositions such as : interactional modification makes input comprehensible; comprehensible input promotes acquisition; therefore, interactional modification promotes acquisition.

Sociolinguistic Research on Second Language Development

Sociolinguistic research on second language development is concerned specifically with external “socio-cultural factors and issues of learner identities”, which are relevant to the influences of intelligence, attitude, personality and individuality, motivation, learner preferences, and age in

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second language learning (Light brown & Spada 1999). Bell (1984) points out that the intra speaker variation can be derived from the inter speaker or culture or social variation, so each group differentiates its variety of opportunities to express their opinions, suggestions, or taste to share language from others and its second language learning ability is subsequently valued by itself and others.

Intelligence

Intelligence is “a culturally derived abstraction that members of any given society coin to make sense of observed differences in performance of individuals within and between social groups”. According to Thomas (1994) there are eight kinds of intelligence, namely:

- i) Linguistic intelligence**
- ii) Logical -mathematical intelligence**
- iii) Bodily kinesthetic intelligence**
- iv) Spatial intelligence**
- v) Musical intelligence**
- vi) Interpersonal intelligence**
- vii) Intrapersonal intelligence**
- viii) Naturalist intelligence**
- ix) Emotional intelligence (Dr. Peter Salovey & Dr. John Mayer, 1990)**

Attitude

An attitude is considered to be a property of an individual personality, less enduring than temperament but more enduring than a motive or a mood (Thomas 1978). Factors that may contribute to a learner’s attitude towards second language learning are related to cognitive, affective and cognitive components (Thomas 1978).

Personality and Individuality

Personality refers to the thinking and behavior that is directed outward and inward (Eysenck, 1970; Janssen & Grabowski 1993). Personalization activities provide the learners their real life experiences or ideas, and to apply their issues or concerns to some controversial topics and Individuality implies “a situation where learners are given a measure of freedom to choose how and what they learnt at any particular time” (Ur 1996 : 233). Individualization activities allow the learners to act at their own pace, in their own manner and style & on the topics or content of their own choice.

Motivation

Motivation involves “the attitudes and affective states that influence the degree of effort that Language in India www.languageinindia.com

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learners make to learn an L2” (Ellis 1997 : 75). Generally speaking, four kinds of motivation have mainly been identified : instrumental, integrative, intrinsic and extrinsic Gardner & Lambert 1972, Deci 1975).

Learner’s Preferences

Learner’s motivation and preferences in language learning are generally due to their learning style and beliefs that influence the strategies chosen for them to study. Their preferable and intentional behaviours and thoughts engaged during learning will affect their language encoding process.

Age

The idea that there is an age factor in second language development has long been a subject of debate. Biologically it is argued that there is a specific and limited time period for language acquisition called the Critical Period Hypothesis and so on had reported that the age of starting to learn a second language earlier showed a noticeable influence on accent. However, regarding the cognitive, affective and environmental perspectives in second language development, the age factor will be filled with complicated explanations.

Advantages of a Social Perspective on Second Language Acquisition

A social perspective of second language acquisition focuses on the learning process with the goal of exploring the kinds of classroom tasks that appear to facilitate second language learning. The purpose of these tasks is to take into account the interplay between the content of the curriculum and the process by which it is realized.

Therefore, in the process of accomplishing instructional objectives, classroom interactive processes take place among the participants and lead to the creation of a whole range of learning opportunities which may cause many unexpected contributions, thus creating great advantages considered to be the realization of communicative competence as well as performance in relevant social situation (Slimani, 2001).

Amplifying Opportunities and Topics

The social perspective of second language development encourages interactive learning. By learning interactively or collaboratively , learners are assigned to learn by group or pair work, in which they participate and support each other. This increases opportunities for the learners to talk. Moreover, through the observation of the classroom contributions from the learner, the teacher collects more typical topics that are of interest to the learner. Hence, the learner is an active part of the classroom planning rather than just an inactive passively fed receiver,

Facilitating more negotiation of meaning, also by working in pairs or groups without the

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instructor's control, the learners sense a relaxed learning atmosphere of casualness without threat or competition. They will display their abilities to their best to interact with colleagues for support or ideas and to express their own points of view in order to comprehend meanings in the light of their own contexts, thus creating amounts of comprehensible input. (Jacobs & Hall 2002). Learners implementing those tasks are compelled not only to think of their own but also of their group members as well. Team work offers challenges for the learner to choose a best response among several options to make decisions and to analyze arguments or generate insights into particular meanings and interpretations by critical thinking (Lee Maureen & Jacobs 1998). catering for the specific needs of different learners.

Language Development and Instruction

A Social Perspective on Second Language Development and Instruction assists the learners in fostering an intrinsic motivation and a desire to invest effort in the learning for its own sake. Then they will "find their own way, taking charge of their learning" and "make their own opportunities for practice in using the language inside and outside the classroom" (Brown 2001 : 209).

Motivation and Interest Variation Studies

Establishing motivation and interest variation studies have found that motivation is very strongly related to achievement in language learning (e.g. Gardner & Lambert 1972 ; Gardner 1980). A social perspective on second language learning makes language learning a deeply social and cultural aspect that requires the incorporation of a wide range of comprehensive contents: the L2 culture, the learner's life experience and family background, individual personalities and learning styles, psychological and linguistic factors, which bring some specific and organic contents into the classroom (Dornyei, 2001). These contents can not only be adapted for multilevel learners: from the elementary to the advanced, but also be used to always ensure a more unpredictable, diverse, meaningful, interesting and vivid output, thus stimulating the learner's motivation and their longing for participation in the language classroom.

Producing Oral Fluency

The interactions among the learners in the classroom provide adequate activities for each participant to air their voices. It also obliges the learners to open their mouths and talk frequently. Hence, there are more chances for the learners to practice rather than just to listen to the teacher. Their ability to speak is improved. Monitoring what was learned in a collaborative classroom, learners contribute to each other and are made more aware of their own; they can in fact do a substantial proportion of the monitoring on their own. Moreover, classroom interaction offers an operational way of understanding what the learners perceive they have learned, which "makes it possible to relate learning claims to the immediate environment from which they emerged in order to see if it is possible to establish a relationship" (Slimani 2001 : 289).

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Creating a Positive Mutual Learning Environment

Classroom dynamics can provide a comprehensive feedback from the learners, such as: a wide diversity of opinions, references, values, many different experiences and styles of learning. The rich dissimilar feedback compels the instructors to adjust their teaching pedagogy in accordance with the learners demand and interest, evaluate their learners' receptive and productive competence, and develop their professional technique to meet the challenges in a better way. Hence a positive mutual learning classroom climate between the teacher and the learner can be created that promotes genuine language learning.

Methodology of Teaching & Curriculum

From the above mentioned theories and advantages, it is inferred that the following deserve consideration. Proposals for task-based language teaching. The process-oriented sociolinguistic approach provides impetus for the development of task-based language teaching. Proponents of task-based language teaching point out that second language acquisition research shows that successful language learning involves learners in negotiation of meaning. In the process of negotiating with a speaker of the target language, the learner receives the kind of input needed to facilitate learning.

Curriculum Review

Curriculum should be designed in proportion to the learner's receptive capacity & development needs, further sustainability of his motivation required continuous practices. It is proposed that classroom tasks that involve negotiation of meaning should form the basis of the language teaching curriculum and that tasks can be used to facilitate practice of both language forms and communicative functions. A comprehensive curriculum of assistance of one form or another. The classroom implementation of the desired curriculum firstly needs to take into account one form of assistance, that is the contextual information which includes careful thoughts about the different variables of the Learner's performances, the socio cultural settings and the exposure to the SL. Here, I suggest that teacher should provide enough teaching and need to follow up participating in contextualize teaching. This may take the use of audio visual teaching & group dynamics, dialogue method and interactive approaches with relevant cognitive exercises.

Conclusion

A social perspective approach to second language development examines "the relationship between society and second language learning". It high lights the specific social factors that affect second language learning, Although second language learning is a complex phenomenon with different variables concerning the psychological factors of the learner and the socio-cultural elements of the contexts, the interactional approach to second language learning still ensures a successful method which makes sense in the language classroom.

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By viewing the advantages and teaching implications of the sociolinguistic approach, it can be concluded that a social perspective of second language development contributes to setting up a climate of mutual learning both for the teacher and the learners, which activates the autonomous learning motivation and creates diversity in the learning atmosphere.

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