

Social, Psychological and Neurological Factors in an ESL Classroom

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Abstract: *Language proficiency is neurologically and psychologically affiliated with sociological ingredients of human life. Both the process of acquisition and competence, as well as, performance is integrally intertwined within combination of human lingual production. In this paper, discussion has been laid out which is methodologically pivotal in ESL classroom in an Asian context. It has been globally accepted that an effective approach towards L2 learning or acquisition should be linguistically known and pedagogically interwoven by socio linguistic elements. A pragmatic implementation of socio learning approach can eventually contribute to a better achievement of efficiency level of neural factors that are absolutely scientifically, as well as, biologically decided. So in this paper an initiative has been launched to incorporate a relationship between neurological foundation and socio issue that can provide a teacher with authentic materials of teaching directed with the ideas of how to give feedback, motivation and reduce the stress level of the learners. It is universally true that L1 interruption that leads to fossilization of innate lingual approach of learner is logically proven to arise a high level stress in learners mind. We logically endeavoured to make the learning process convenient and achievement of minimising stress level while students use language in an authentic ESL learning atmosphere.*

Keywords: *Neuro-linguistics, ESL Classroom, Sociolinguistics, Psycholinguistics, Fossilization.*

In today's world the ability to speak a language efficiently riding over the existing political, economical and cultural barriers has become challenging, as well as, psychologically painstaking. Language is both a neurological, as well as, psychological creation. To reach the superior level of competence language learning procedure should be in a social context because language is an absolute social phenomenon. In any type of language classroom, we must emphasize the factors of socio linguistic competence to make learners motivated to acquire "as native like" speech. The ability to adjust this speech to the situation is called socio linguistic competence and without this ability, meaning can become entirely different from that which the speaker intended. The logical consequences of a language learning always involve the intricate, sensitive and emotional issues of social life that involve the inter language barriers that students undergo while learning the foreign language. The students should be prepared to make them conceptualized the complicated and keen aspects of social expression in a communicative scenario. The linguistic fact is that language is variable as the use of it is socially embedded. Smith (1988) said "in thinking about the function it is always good to remember that language has a profound relationship with the world around us." Johnston (2008) said that there are a few basic points that had to be made about the nature of socially embedded language use and language acquisition. So in language variability is meaningful because societies attach meaning to it. As for the students learning the target language is staying outside the native environment cannot have any idea on actual understanding of the cultural and ethnic background of the language.

It is necessary for students to study culture and cross- cultural differences so that they can see where their native culture differs from the culture of the language they are learning. However, teaching culture in the classroom is quite problematic. Richard (1985:1) reminds us "the current status of English has turned a significant percentage of the world's population into part time users on learners of English." So ESL or ELT teachers work in geographical isolation may not have access to channels of professional communication while different countries have different educational systems and philosophies resulting in teachers being subject to different expectations and pressures. Most of the time it truly becomes a major problem for the teachers to provide the students with positive feedback during the time of psychological stress caused by variable and unknown social factors of the English language.

The language teachers are aware of the fact that language is variable and may even be part in defined by its variability (in fact that is exactly sociolinguistics does).The language teachers are aware of this ,but they are not sure of what it really means. Variability is meaningful because societies attach meaning to it. So for the students learning a language outside of the society in which the particular target language is spoken, there may be no understanding as well as internal conceptualizing of this variation. All language use is conditioned. Different ways exist to look at language functions which account for the ways reasons we use the language. In a

language classroom in this way sociolinguistics is a humanistic philosophy and a set of beliefs and suggestion based on popular psychology and designed to convince and motivate people to use language in a way of practical manner. Neurolinguistic practitioners believe that if EFL teachers adopt and use the principles of psycholinguistics programming, they will be more effective teachers in the long term. Psycholinguistics has focused their investigation on the studies of second language acquisition and use, as well as, fossilization of the first language. In an ESL classroom when the learning procedure is launched the study of SLA is given rise to a large number of models. The acquisitional approach, in conjunction with the classical statistical learning module has become the leading model for many investors(Chomsky and Lavsik ,1993;Pinkar,1994).Linguistic parameters are basically set of grammatical variation within a form of invariant principles, are considered to be a part of the innate endowment of universal grammar, an exposure to a specific sociolinguistic environment that aims at resulting in the fixation of one's psychological conceptualizing of target language. In this psychological conceptualizing of social factors in an ESL classroom the factors like culture independent is a major phenomenal issue covering the factors like ethnicity, language impairment and linguistic barriers.

The phenomenal concept of culture is so embedded in people that they are aware of many characteristics within their own culture. So it is difficult for teacher to teach language along with teaching cultural factors relying on their own perception of their native culture. Moreover, what is believed to say in a given situation is quite different from what is actually found in a hypothetical classroom. Since it is found that linguists are not aware of their own sociolinguistics rules applied for speaking, it is absolutely unrealistic to expect language teachers to have this knowledge available by them. Chomsky, Katz and Fodor, (1991) consider language as a characteristic faculty of humans which demonstrates that neuropsychological process of language learning is navigated and mediated by the left hemisphere of the speakers. So human can acquire language through them even exist a number of barriers but a language organ that emerges in the left hemisphere make it possible to learn the language (Chomsky, 1939).In this way the socio cultural factors of native language gets stuck to the barrier of human. The improvisement that in innate in native language learning, might be seemed extrinsically formulated to the SLA learner.

Fossilization is a pragmatic barrier in teaching learning situation.L2 learners cannot simply observe native speakers and adjust their manner of speaking accordingly. The internal and intricate probing of this query is totally psychological. The sheer fact is that language is so deeply embedded within a person's subconscious that he becomes mentally unable to notify where the target language rules of speaking differ from their native language rules which appear to be so natural. Since the time of birth children are raised within cultural context as culture is an integral part of language. The process of socialisation in the conventional rules and norms of culture occur simultaneously as a part of language acquisition (Ochs and Schieffelin, 1984).Fossilization is a mental impairment. Neuro factors like outcomes, rapport, sensory acquiring, flexibility are when one is socialized in own native language culture from birth, much of one's understanding is found in these early cultural lessons. Culture intensively affects perception of the world and persons that is inwardly and outwardly formulated by ethnicity and emotional structure, as well as, socio psycho background. These issues work behind de construct individual's psycho understanding of L2 language. So very naturally the L2 learner depicts inability to perceive the other possible ways of viewing life. In this case the L2 culture, socio psycho pattern of language variability remain non-realizable by the learners. Moreover, in Asian perspective one thing is very important that as most of the countries are economically poor, ways to view the world is very dramatically from culture to culture. For example, American measures a person's worth by their achievement and accomplishment in life. This outlook is very different from very low western societies like Bangladesh, Pakistan, and Nepal etc. where a person is evaluated by his ethnic background, family status and hereditary in heritage. When people are embedded in their native language they are unable to understand or accept the fact that other cultures may view the world differently and they are said to suffer from cultural myopia. Cultural myopia affects everyone to some extent, since people are socialized in their culture, their entire lives unless they leave it to live somewhere else (Ochs and Schieffelin, 1984). Cultural myopia is the main factor in explaining why pragmatic fossilization occurs despite repeated exposure to target culture norm of speaking.

Cultural myopia becomes as serious problem when the L2 learners realizes how frequently a society's cultural values are reflected in use of language. So in a language classroom entire things should be taken into delicate commiseration by the teacher because without reviewing sociolinguistic competence, an L2 learner can never submit the success of being a fluent speaker in the target language. So in ESL classroom it has become an unavoidable issue to help students attain this social knowledge through teaching culture in the foreign language classroom. However, the term culture is very amorphous and society's culture is "all encomapping that it is hard to define and reduce to teachable components, especially for students with limited target language proficiency.

In a language classroom pragmatic fossilization is a serious problem that can result in numerous misunderstanding and hurt feelings. When a language learner has to function in a target language culture that is different from their native culture, they may have to suffer through numerous such problems in the struggle to

learn the new cultural rules of speaking. Most of times the language learners may not even notice that they are breaking these rules of speaking, and unknowingly continue to offend native speakers without even realizing that they are doing so. The rules of speaking change as one moves from culture to culture and cultural context plays a vital roles in accurate expression of meaning.

It is very difficult to teach culture and sociolinguistic issues explicitly in the classroom. However, this approach is quite problematic. Culture is very hard to define, much less teach to students not fully competent in the language of instruction. This situation leads to teaching culture in the advanced level classes. Learners consider the vast cultural differences as major barriers to conform to the rules of target language. So,

1. The teacher should not discourage cultural myopia. It should be treated as psychological understanding.

2. Pragmatic fossilization is a common existing problem that learners face. So they need to use pragmatic transfer.

3. Most of the time, the learners tend to interpret the contact of other culture through the realization of their own culture resulting in decontextualization of particular situation.

So the teacher must show ultimate patience in handling with semiotic problem of the learners and perceive the fact that sociolinguistic competence is a most difficult achievement that may never occurs through immersion in the target language culture alone, but rather it is a skill that must be internalized in the foreign language classroom.

Early in twentieth century, language teachers focused primarily on grammar and translation on written text. This was called Grammar Translation Method (GTM).GTM underwent huge popularity but eventually it failed to provide the learners with success of speaking. The shift of focus to speaking competence in recent fostered the idea of communicative competence, out of the four skills the ability of peak a language proficiency is a major criterion of having command of a language. Canale and swain in 1980 and 1983(cited in Onaggio Hadley 1993, pp.6-7) model for communicative competence serves to ensure that non-linguistic aspects of language such as socio linguistic competence would not be ignored in ESL classroom of L2 learning. It's realistically observed and research shows us that the importance components of sociolinguistics competence are the knowledge of target language culture and awareness of cross cultural differences.A second language teaching is such a sensitive topic, a culture to a classroom of students from countries all around the world can be particularly challenging.

Another problem is that both culture and sociolinguistic features are so deeply ignored within a person that she or he is not even aware that of different social rules of target language culture. In order to learn appropriateness of social norm in the target language culture it is necessary for the students to study culture and cross cultural differences so that they can understand and perceive the basic existing differences between native language and L2.As culture is a complex phenomenon for the teachers it is very tough to teach them to an optimum level to the students. Most of the time, it is seen that students get de-motivated by cross- cultural studies. Culture shock, pragmatic fossilization create a mental impediment in them and students with limited proficiency in the language naturally tend to contextual memorization of the language rather than considering them as integral part of learning procedures. In case of facing this type of situation, the teacher must be caution of avoiding stereotypes and unintentionally offending students by hurting their ethnic background, sex, colour, customs, creed, religion etc.

There is an inseparable relation between language and mind which we call psycholinguistic that propagates the mental processes with learning, producing and understanding the language. In other way, language learning and production depends on the brain which we define as neuro-linguistic.

To fasten the learning process, human brain, a spark that everyone especially teachers look for in a classroom while teaching the second language, has a significant role. Apart from social factors psychological, as well as, neurological functions have a lion share role in learning the second language. Cerebrum (the main part of human brain) is divided into two hemispheres, right and left where each hemisphere is divided into several regions, such as frontal lobes and posterior lobes; whose have particular tasks to do. For example, the function of frontal lobes is to determine abstract reasoning and planning whereas a posterior lobe is concerned with the vision. In early ages, it was believed that the functions of different regions of the brain are predetermined from birth. However, recent study shows that specific function of specific region can be shaped by the experience and learning. The functions of the brain can be developed. When a person sees or hears an action, in his brain he is performing the action himself. It results because the tiny cells in the brain, mirror neurons, observe the action through the chemical pulses that it is given off. This is the reason sometimes learners can learn something quickly and easily by demonstration rather instructions. In 1980, Leonardo Fogassi and Vittorio Gallese of the University of Parma made a revolutionary observation that one's brain reacts the same way watching someone else do something as when he is performing the action himself. In fact, the function of mirror neurons explains how people teach and others learn. For example, if someone watches and listens to other yawns, s/he will probably have the impulse to do the same, even if s/he not at all tired.

In a classroom teacher should know and emphasize these functions to develop learners' brain to speed up the adaptability of new materials introduced in the SLA classroom. While teaching the second language medium of instruction should be in the target language to stimulate learners' ability and use the language. There is direct evidence that when learning takes place neuro-chemical communication between neurons occurs means a connection is created between not only adjacent neurons but also distant neurons. These connections are made between simple to complex circuits and vice versa. Time is required to establish new neural networks and connections between networks. The neural mechanism for learning is same as the products of learning. Learning is a process that establishes new connections among networks. This is why; it takes time to learn a new thing. There is a profound implication of the functions of the brain in a classroom. Teacher should focus different functions discretely and as a whole. In a classroom while introducing and teaching simple materials in isolation, for instance, expressing simple emotions through vocabularies and idioms, teacher should keep in mind that using same materials in a complex situation takes time as the learners need to practice these to be able to grasp fluency. Moreover, time is needed as one region of the brain interacts with another region to process simple information into complex and vice versa. David McNeill, an American psycholinguist, believes that two concepts, syntactic thinking and imagistic thinking, are formed simultaneously in our brain when we speak. The first is concerned with the sequence of the syllables, words, phrases and sentences we speak and latter creates the big picture of what we are going to say. Thus it forms a certain "time period" to utter in the target language. According to Stiles and Thal, there may be a link between the word comprehension problems of learners and the right hemisphere of the brain. "To understand the meaning of a new word, children have to integrate information from many to understand different sources. These sources include acoustic input, but they also include visual information, tactile information, memories of the immediately preceding context, emotions in short, a range of experiences that define the initial meaning of a word and refine that meaning over time" (Stiles and Thal, as cited in Elman et al., pp. 309-310).

There are some psychological characteristics which also have an impact in learning the second language. Affective filter hypothesis introduced by popular linguist, Steven Krashen explains such characteristics. Learners' attitude and motivation play a significant role in learning a second language. A learner with high affective filter (high attitude and high motivation) learns the target language more quickly and easily than a learner with low affective filter (low attitude and low motivation). In a classroom teacher should create such an environment that learners face less stress, less anxiety which ultimately leads to high motivation towards learning the target language. While teaching the target language teacher's mentality should be "clear the heads" of learners instead "fill the heads" by giving the learners a sense of "being" rather than a sense of "doing". This means learners should be given adequate time to rest their mind and create positive attitude towards learning the target language. An individual's capacity to learn something highly depends on the neuropsychological state (a state of curiosity rather than a state of boredom), on the beliefs about learning (learning is worthwhile) and believe oneself as a learner (one have ability to learn).

In Asian context L2 teaching is methodologically, as well as, psychologically complicated and sometimes de-motivating for the learners. Life style in Asian is ethically predetermined by economic stability, religion and various taboo concerning, ethnicity and social prejudices. Western life and culture is not followed in a general manner.

In any ESL classroom in south Asian countries social barriers play major role that can affect the whole paradigmatic, as well as, pedagogic structure. The syllabus design methodology should follow some strict rules when we aim at teaching in Asian ESL context. Religion is the problem of purity for the Asians. So they cannot be comfortable when the L2 teaching context does not go with their religion upbringing. The social context like ordering in pub or searching for girl friend will not confront to the constructive mental structure of this Asian students like Bangladesh, Pakistan, and Nepal etc. It can be argued that the elite class belonging to the upper class is used to westernized life patterns. Nevertheless, the truth is in authentic ESL classroom the majority students represent original social fundamentalism. So their psychological understanding and capability must be adhered to the accepted classroom teaching patterns. L1 has always an inter-language impediment shock that appears and students become de-motivated,

The factors, social, psychological, as well as, neurological that we have discussed in this paper have significance on constructing a socio-psycho relationship between teachers and ESL learners. The teacher should need to comprehend the learner's psycho milieu in respect to fastening the learning procedures, as well as, providing students with interactional intrinsic motivational spirit. So in a bilingual ESL context the linguistics skills materials (textual and contextual) must be affiliated with the psychological needs of the learners to guarantee the maximum level of proficiency in term of achievements. While in the classroom the teacher needs to have a pre-mind set of potential troubles and queries that might come from the part of the learners when they are thrown into an environment that differs from his own native environment. In this case it will be the teacher who is going to handle the situation with her own innate psychological apprehension along with maximum patience and ability of improvisation in levelling down students' stress and their tendency to be de-motivated.

The primal philosophy of communication lies in successful expression of one's intended meaning, which is not always easy as one would hope. Language teaching materials in ESL classroom should be embedded within the culture of the target language community which ultimately implies that a certain level of language proficiency is necessary to speak effectively in that particular community. Of course it is important for the language teachers to try to teach the students how society stereotypes people and how the stereotypical issues affect the language that we use in relation to the people of target language. Again, we need to think of the students and find out what would be comprehensible to them as far as the topic and the content of conversation are concerned. ESL teachers are very important for the learners to identify how different roles are marked in L2 learning context, also need to make sure that students understand how these roles are marked so that they can actually play roles related to specific functions when they are put into real life context of using English. What the teachers should keep in mind is that there should not be any mismatch between the role that students are playing at the moment and the language they are used to support in actual interactional environment.

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