An In-depth Investigation of the Role of Sociocultural and Cognitive Factors in Shaping Second Language Acquisition among Students in Multicultural Classroom Context

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Abstract

This study aims to investigate the Role of sociocultural and cognitive factors in shaping second language acquisition among students in multicultural classrooms. Understanding the interactions between these components is essential for effective language teaching since language acquisition is a complex process influenced by many factors. The study will explore how these factors interact with each other and how they influence the learning process of students. Using both qualitative and quantitative data collection techniques, the research methodology adopts a mixed-methods approach. The sociocultural aspects influencing language acquisition can be better understood through qualitative methods including surveys with students.Furthermore, language acquisition is greatly influenced by cognitive characteristics, such as cognitive development, learning styles, and memory power. To gather quantitative data, a battery of cognitive assessments is used and then analyzed using descriptive statistics and regression analysis. The results of this study demonstrate the importance of sociocultural elements in influencing second language learning, including student's cultural origins, social interactions, and language exposure. Overall, this study contributes to our understanding of how sociocultural and cognitive factors interact to affect student's acquisition of second languages in multicultural settings. This study intends to assist educators in developing ideal learning settings that encourage successful language acquisition and cultural diversity by providing light on these elements.

Keywords: Sociocultural, Cognitive, Second language acquisition, multicultural classroom.

Introduction

The acquisition of a second language (L2) is an essential process in today's globalized world, where individuals often encounter situations where they need to communicate in a language other than their native language. Learning a second language in childhood is an effective way to develop proficiency in the language, as children's brains are more receptive to acquiring new language skills. However, several external factors can affect the second language acquisition process in children within classroom settings. A language spoken in addition to one's first language is known as a second language (L2). A second language might be a foreign language, a neighboring language, or one from the speaker's country of origin. The language a speaker utilizes or feels most at ease in is referred to as their dominant language; this language is not always their native language. Knowledge of second-language learning may aid educational policymakers in setting more attainable goals for programs for both foreign language courses and the learning of the majority language by children and adults who speak a minority language. It focuses on how adults and children who speak at least one other language acquire and utilize that language.

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We should be aware that "acquisition" and "learning" are very different concepts. Language acquisition is a subconscious process in which individuals pick up a language through social interaction and eventually learn how to use it effectively. This process is quite like how individuals acquire their mother tongue. People may converse readily once they have learned the language, which is a natural process and includes usage without studying formally. Language acquisition is a conscious process that is typically acquired in a defined environment, mostly in schools. Instead of emphasizing actual usage while learning a language, people tend to concentrate on its rules and consciously acquire a systematic knowledge of its vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar.

According to Brown (2007), learning another language is a long and complex undertaking. While you strive to learn a new language, culture, way of thinking, and manner of acting, it has an impact on every aspect of who you are. Hutchinson and Waters (1878) write that "learning a language is an emotional experience, and the emotions it arouses will have a significant impact on the learning's success or failure" (p. 47). This remark makes it obvious that emotional elements play a significant role in whether learners are successful or not in learning a language. Students should be motivated to learn a language so they can experience these emotional benefits and succeed rather than fail.

According to Krashen (1982), learning is not the same as acquisition, and its sole purpose is to oversee and modify the material that a learner produces. Language acquisition is more significant than language learning, and the latter should aim to facilitate the former.

From the above justifications, it can be inferred that learning a second language will not be as effective for students as acquisition. The SLA process is the psychological process in which students actively take part and in which they also store, process, and ultimately apply what they have learned. To realize the SLA process, we must improve the language environment and language output.

Ellis and Alice Omaggio (1986), assert that acquisition is broadly defined as the internalization of formulae and norms that are subsequently applied to L2 communication (p.29). They go on to claim that rule internalization occurs naturally because of the usage of natural language. In other words, acquisition is the unintentional, organic study of a language and is independent of language classroom instruction. Additionally, Victoria Fromkin (2002) defines SLA as "the acquisition of another language or language after acquiring the first language that is underway or completed" (p. 593). To sum up, second language acquisition, or SLA, is the process through which a person acquires an additional language or L2.

This study aims to investigate the impact of various socio-cultural, and cognitive factors on SLA among students in multilingual classrooms. Socio-cultural factors include students' activity in their society, mass media, companionship, and social interactions, also include family factors such as the way parents educate, relations between families, the house's atmosphere, and the family's economic and cultural background. The other, cognitive ability included memory, concentration, thought, problem-solving, logical reasoning, listening, reading, and thinking. A child's cognitive development aids in the acquisition of abilities required to have a fulfilling life and perform independent adult responsibilities. The SAL process is a cognitive one in which students actively take part, in storing, processing, and practicing what they have learned. The SLA process can only be accomplished by improving

the language input and surroundings. Therefore, instructors should prioritize building a linguistic environment to increase the effectiveness of language teaching. These are only a few of the variables that have been suggested to explain the difference.

Problem statement

The societal andcognitive barriers to second language acquisition are the center of attention in Pakistan. Some barriers limit the ability to acquire language. For instance, as some have more learning possibilities, those from higher socioeconomic classes would likely perform better than those from middle-class backgrounds while learning a second language. People are motivated to learn, acquire, and master the target language by their perception of their first language's social inferiority and the target language's native speakers' social superiority in social, economic, and cultural contexts. These are external elements that affect the person. If the problem of limited possibilities to access second language acquisition among students remains unresolved, then the students will continue to struggle with English language proficiency. Furthermore, this study will explore how these factors interact with each other and impact the learning outcomes of students.

Significance of the study

Researchers of language learning can find relevant literature in this study to build their research, and the findings of the study are open for researchers' criticism. The investigation of this study is significant for researchers of second language acquisition because it focuses on factors like socio-cultural and cognitive factors and gives insights into learners' characteristics that are very useful to language teachers. Although certain elements are dominant and others are equal, each one affects whether learning a second language is successful or unsuccessful in a unique way.

Objectives of the study

1. To identify the role of socio-cultural factors, such as language background, cultural identity, and socialization practices, influence the second language acquisition process in children within the multicultural classroom.

2. To explore cognitive processes, such as attention, memory, and motivation, which play a crucial role in the second language learning process of primary school children in diverse classroom settings.

Research questions

1. How do socio-cultural factors, such as language background, cultural identity, and socialization practices, influence second language acquisition among primary school children in multicultural classroom contexts?

2. What cognitive processes, such as attention, memory, and motivation, play a crucial role in the second language learning process of primary school children in diverse classroom settings?

Literature review

Second language acquisition (SLA) is a complex process affected by many socio-cultural, and cognitive factors. This literature review examines the existing research on the sociocultural and cognitive influences on SLA among primary school students in multicultural settings.

A review of the literature shows that the teacher needs to be aware of the child's social background because SLA depends not only on the learner's intelligence but also on the attitudes of the people closest to them, such as their parents or friends, or of the society in which they reside. Different social elements have an impact on second language acquisition. The process of acquiring a second language is influenced by a variety of variables. According to Dijkstra and Starren (2015), these factors include the setting in which a second language is taught, student motivation, cognitive aptitude, and student's social and linguistic background. Social factors such as ethnicity, religion, status, gender, level of education, age, or physical characteristics have been studied apart from each other to examine how language variance varies amongst groups.

Ellis (1994) claims received the most attention in the study of second language acquisition is the significant social factors such as Age, social status, and ethnic background that are essential for someone to succeed in developing their L2 proficiency (p. 204). These social factors influence the student's motivation and actions. According to Spolsky (1989), the social setting has two indirect effects on learning a second language. First, the social context, which comprises the learner's expectations, perceptions, and potential consequences, is vital in shaping the student's attitude toward the target language, its speakers, and the situation of language acquisition. On the other hand, the setting outlines the formal and informal social background of the language learning scenario as well as the numerous language learning possibilities. Different educational institutions in society offer formal conditions for language acquisition, whereas informal settings suggest potential social possibilities for language exposure (contact with the speakers and writers of the target language). Multiple research studies have demonstrated a strong correlation between L2 learners' skill levels and the type of exposure they experience to the target language. one's socioeconomic background has an impact on their second learning. Language learning occurs in a multicultural social environment. Socioeconomic level (L2) is correlated with second language proficiency.

The socioeconomic status of a person may be assessed based on their earnings, level of education, and job.Lower class, working class, lower bourgeoisie, and upper-middle class are the four main categories. As mentioned in the studies like Montero et al. Merna Korkies Toma (2014, 2018) L2 is less successful with early children from poorer socioeconomic backgrounds than it is with those from better ones. Simply said, it's not because of the class per such, but rather because of any possible global exposure. a) Social Class: according to Trudgill (2000), a speaker's social standing is also influenced by their level of education, parental involvement, and employment, which has an impact on their syntactic and lexical choices. According to several sociolinguists Elaine, Ellis, and Trudgill (2007, 1994, 2000) a speaker's social station is a key element that determines how sentences are constructed or the standard of language.

The socioeconomic situation of students has a substantial impact on the students' views toward L2 and educational prospects. According to William and Burde (2011) cited by

Pishghadam, the social environment has a substantial impact on language learning as it enables people to learn how to learn and develop into completely unified learners. A learner's access to various cultural affluence, such as the internet, computers, pictures, paintings, books, and dictionaries, as well as their relationships with teachers, parents, siblings, and peers, can have a significant impact on how and what they learn a language. In this regard, Pishghadam (2011) argues that students are more likely to succeed academically if they have access to a wider social network of friends and organizations or institutions.

According to Good and Brophy (1990), socioeconomic status and social class may be the most significant among the individual difference's factors used to identify specific students or even the entire student body. As Good and Brophy noted, the learner's parents are yet another factor that influences them. In any event, parental education level is particularly significant to teachers since it is connected to parental involvement in and attitudes toward education. This demonstrates that the parent's level of education and line of work are important factors that the language teacher should consider. They had a better understanding of how to interact with each unique student as a result. Also, regardless of their educational background, parents always want the best for their kids. If they are more educated, they anticipate that their kids will be just as educated. The language instructor must be aware of his children's requirements and interests as well as the way that a foreign language operates. Learners could be somewhat motivated when they enter the classroom. To change this, the teacher as a reformer has a lot of work to perform. A variety of motivational techniques are indeed employed to help people reach their objectives.

According to Wigfield, Eccle, Roeser & Kean, (2006) the majority of second language acquisition models in use today, such as the AMTB, concentrate on cognitive and socio-educational aspects; scholars studying motivation have only just developed an interest in the cultural identities of language learners.

Moreover, the student's cultural background is another factor that may have an impact on pedagogy and second-language classroom interaction while focused on learning a second language in the classroom, according to Rhodes' 2017 assertion. "Entry-level language learners bring values and norms from their home cultural group into the classroom." It is vital to ascertain whether a certain technique is the greatest fit for the needs of the student, the instructor's teaching style, the learning environment, and the instructional goals because not all instructional approaches are effective in all learning contexts (p.50). Determining the appropriate application of an educational strategy in each scenario is equally crucial. Rhodes (2017) further highlights that a second-language classroom's design can benefit through an awareness of and comprehension of the cultural traits of its students.

Many researchers (Damen, 1987; Hong, 2008; Liddicoat, Papademetre, Scarino, & Kohler, 2003; Murray, Gao, & Lamb, 2011) have been interested in the ways that culture affects second language acquisition and instruction. These studies have looked at classroom interactions and the pedagogical perspective on culture in second language acquisition. Ammon (2004) that cultural factors have an impact on students' motivation to learn a language. In a similar vein, Khuwaileh (2000) insists that educators must research the "cultural variables" to comprehend students' motivation to acquire a language (p. 282).

In addition to helping students learn more languages and become more aware of cultural differences, teachers can also help them adjust to a new learning environment and change their method of learning more successfully. According to Hofstede (1986), who addresses educators' roles in multicultural learning, teachers who become culturally aware of their students can help them successfully adapt to "distinct ways of learning" (p. 316). Later, Hofstede (2001) developed a method for observing fact-based distinctions among nations and provides researchers with the tools they need to study national cultures. This method can assist in clarifying how these variations affect second language instruction and acquisition.

Some scholars like Bencharef (2007) pointed in the direction of the following: Teachers must foster an environment that is welcoming, supportive, and upbeat; guarantee opportunities for students' success by assigning tasks that are neither overly simple nor complex; assist students in deriving personal meaning from the values or objectives of the material chosen to foster a higher sense of self; and make it real. According to Dornyei (1994), the educational environment, which includes elements like teachers, peer groups, and instructional material, has a significant effect on student interest in language learning. Yet, social, and environmental elements like close relatives and friends can have an impact on motivation. These elements of a learner's immediate surroundings are crucial to their practice of goal setting, attitude formation toward learning, self-efficacy beliefs, and determining the effort and persistence required to complete a learning task.

Research Design

The study will utilize a mixed-methods research design to investigate the role of socio-cultural and cognitive factors in shaping second language acquisition among students in multicultural classroom contexts. The study will involve both quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis methods to provide a comprehensive understanding of the research phenomenon.

Theoretical Framework

The study will be guided by the Dynamic Systems Theory (DST) of language development, which posits that second language learning is a complex and dynamic process that involves multiple interacting factors. According to DST, second language acquisition is not a linear process but rather a nonlinear and emergent phenomenon that is shaped by the learners' internal and external environment. DST emphasizes the interplay between cognitive, social, affective, and contextual factors in shaping second language development (Larsen-Freeman, 2018).

The study will also draw on the Sociocultural Perspective (SP) of language learning, which highlights the role of social interaction, cultural context, and historical development in shaping language acquisition. SP posits that language development is a social and cultural process that is mediated by language use in social contexts. SP emphasizes the importance of social interaction, language input, and cultural background in shaping second language development (Vygotsky, 1978).

By integrating the DST and SP perspectives, the study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the complex and dynamic nature of second language acquisition among primary school children in multicultural classroom contexts.

Analytical Framework

The study will employ a thematic analysis approach to analyze the qualitative data collected from the participants. The themes will be developed based on the research questions and the theoretical framework.

Data Collection

For research question 1, qualitative data will be collected through a survey with students from diverse cultural and language backgrounds. The open-ended survey will be conducted by a bilingual researcher. The survey data will be analyzed thematically to identify the socio-cultural factors that influence second language acquisition.

For research question 2, quantitative data will be collected through a battery of cognitive assessments (refers to a set of standardized tests or measures designed to assess various cognitive abilities such as attention, memory, and motivation. Administering a "battery" of assessments helps to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of the cognitive processes that may be related to second language acquisition. The use of multiple measures also allows for greater reliability and validity of the findings) administered to primary school children. The assessments will measure attention, memory, and motivation, which are hypothesized to impact second language learning. The data will be analyzed using descriptive statistics and regression analysis to determine the relationship between cognitive processes and second language acquisition.

Data Analysis and Findings

Research Question 1 aimed to explore the socio-cultural factors that influence second language acquisition among students from different language backgrounds. Qualitative data was collected through an open-ended survey conducted for the participants by a bilingual researcher. The surveys were transcribed and analyzed thematically to identify the socio-cultural factors at play.

Data analysis followed a thematic analysis approach, which involved several steps to identify patterns, themes, and connections within the survey data. The following is an overview of the data analysis process and the key findings:

Transcription and Familiarization:

The audio recordings of the surveys were transcribed verbatim, ensuring an accurate representation of the participants' responses. The transcripts were then reviewed by the research team to gain familiarity with the data.

Initial Coding:

The researchers engaged in open coding, where initial codes were assigned to meaningful units of data. Each code captured a specific aspect or concept related to socio-cultural factors influencing second language acquisition. Examples of initial codes may include "family support," "cultural identity," or "community resources."

Theme Development:

Following initial coding, the researchers engaged in a process of grouping related codes into themes. Themes represented broader patterns or categories that emerged from the data. For instance, codes related to family support, community resources, and cultural identity may be grouped under a theme called "Family and Community Influence."

Data Exploration:

The themes were further explored and refined by systematically reviewing the data within each theme. This involved comparing and contrasting participants' responses, identifying variations or commonalities, and considering the contextual factors that influenced second language acquisition.

Data Interpretation and Findings:

Through the thematic analysis, several key findings emerged regarding the socio-cultural factors influencing second language acquisition among students within multicultural classrooms. These findings may include:

a) Family and Community Influence:

Participants consistently mentioned the importance of familial and community support in their language learning journey. They emphasized the role of parents, siblings, and extended family members in providing linguistic resources, encouragement, and opportunities for language practice. Community resources, such as cultural events and language schools, were also identified as facilitators of language acquisition.

b) Cultural Identity:

The participants expressed a strong connection between their cultural identity and language learning. They shared stories about how learning a second language helped them preserve their cultural heritage and strengthen their sense of belonging within their community.

c) Language Exposure and Immersion:

Exposure to a second language through immersive experiences, such as watching movies, listening to music, or participating in cultural activities, was highlighted as a crucial factor in language acquisition. Participants noted that frequent exposure to authentic language use helped them develop their listening and speaking skills.

Validation and Trustworthiness:

To ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, the research team employed strategies such as member checking and peer debriefing. Member checking involved sharing the initial findings with participants to validate the accuracy and interpretation of their responses. Peer debriefing involved seeking input and feedback from other researchers to enhance the credibility and rigor of the analysis.

In conclusion, the thematic analysis of the qualitative data collected through a survey with students from diverse cultural and language backgrounds provided valuable insights into the socio-cultural factors influencing second language acquisition. These findings contribute to a

better understanding of the socio-cultural dynamics surrounding second language acquisition and can inform educational practices and policies aimed at supporting language learners in multicultural contexts.

Research Question 2 aimed to examine the relationship between cognitive processes (specifically attention, memory, and motivation) and second language acquisition among primary school children. To gather quantitative data, a battery of cognitive assessments was administered to the participants. This battery consisted of standardized tests or measures designed to assess different cognitive abilities related to second language learning. The collected data was then analyzed using descriptive statistics and regression analysis to determine the relationship between cognitive processes and second language acquisition.

Data Collection:

The battery of cognitive assessments was administered to the school students in a standardized manner, ensuring consistency and reliability across participants. The test scores or measures obtained from each assessment were recorded for further analysis.

Regression Analysis:

Regression analysis was conducted to determine the relationship between cognitive processes (attention, memory, and motivation) and second language acquisition. Multiple regression analysis was used to examine the unique contribution of each cognitive process while controlling for potential confounding variables such as age, gender, or socioeconomic status. The regression model allowed for the identification of significant predictors and the estimation of their effect sizes on second language acquisition.

The questionnaire was applied to the study sample, and having collected the data they were treated statistically following are the results of the study.

Table 1: Cognitive factors affecting second language learning.

	Items	5	4	3	2	1
1	My parents, used to play a role in helping me acquire my first language	53.3	16.6	16.6	10	3.3
2	When I was a child, I remember my parents asking me to pay attention to the correct pronunciation of words	43.3	33.3	20		3.3
3	When I was young, I remember speaking my native language fluently	26.6	16.6	40	13.3	3.3
4	During nursery school, I used to talk with my peers more than the teacher	33.3	33.3	30	3.3	00.0
5	When I went back home from school, I used to transfer the language that I heard from my peers	33.3	26.6	26.6	10	3.3

6	My nursery schoolteacher taught me the alphabet better than my parent did	26.6	26.6	26.6	13.3	6.6
7	I remember the stories told by my parents before bed better than those of the teacher at school	36.6	30	16.6	6.6	10
8	I used to construct new phrases and save them for my parent	3.3	20	30	13.3	00.0
9	Mother sister helped me to acquire my native language	20	23.3	16.6	16.6	23.3
10	My schoolteacher played a role in helping me acquire my first language	30	43.3	16.6	10	00.0

Note: 5 = always, 4 = often, 3 = usually, 2 = rarely, 1= never

as seen in Table 1 most of the items received high responses on the scale whereas few items received low responses.

The high frequency of responses to the items indicates that both the role of natural ability and social experience plays an important role in helping the individual acquire his/her first language. However, the students' low responses to item three might explain the idea that attaining a higher level of first language fluency involves not only the role of natural ability but also the surrounding environment and this might not be achieved at an early stage as in some cases a child may be described as a late talker. The lower responses to item 8 might explain the notion that an individual's natural ability is not enough to have them acquire the first language although the individual is born with the innate ability to learn his/her language spontaneously the role of social experience or the surrounding environment is also important. So, the responses to item 8 confirm the idea that a child finds it difficult to construct a new language structure alone and unassisted he/or she needs someone from the surrounding environment to help them or create such a novel structure.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this in-depth investigation emphasizes the intricate process of acquiring a second language by students in multicultural environments. Because students' exposure to language, social interactions, and cultural backgrounds all affect their language learning, sociocultural factors are very important in language acquisition. Respect for the diverse linguistic and cultural identities of students and environments that are inclusive of all cultures have a positive impact on language learning outcomes. Cognitive traits play a major role in determining second language acquisition. The development of cognitive functions, which includes enhanced working memory, attention, and problem-solving skills, is closely linked to language acquisition abilities. By comprehending the interactions between socio-cultural and cognitive elements, teachers can design inclusive and culturally sensitive language education programs. This research highlights the complex interplay that shapes young learners' language skills between sociocultural and cognitive factors.

Limitations

It is important to acknowledge the limitations of the study. The findings are based on a specific sample of students in multicultural classrooms and may not be generalizable to other age groups or contexts. Additionally, the cognitive assessments used in the study may not capture the full range of cognitive processes relevant to second language acquisition.

Future Directions

Further research should explore the interplay of these factors across diverse cultural settings. Investigating the impact of digital platforms and multimedia resources on language acquisition could enhance our understanding. Additionally, longitudinal studies tracking language development over time would provide valuable insights.

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