

IRSTI 16.21.07

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SOCIO-CULTURAL FACTORS AFFECTING THE DEVELOPMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY

Abstract. Since English language became Global language, the majority of people began to learn English as a foreign language in order to obtain goals such as developing international relations and communicating with interlocutors, communicational skills. Foreign language learning is a demanding task. Apart from other requirements, such as the investment of time and effort, and a proper learning environment with qualified teachers, learners need to possess a strong motivational which force to ease and expedite learning. The study investigated various factors influencing language learning proficiency. Socio-cultural factors take also important place on the development of students' English language proficiency. Actually, foreign language learning is a complex system which occurs under the influence of various mutually influencing and interacting factors. This article aims to reveal the features of the culture, society in the process of learning foreign language and identify the causes of failure in learning language.

Key words: socio-cultural factors, language proficiency, second language acquisition

Аңдатпа. Ағылшын тілі жаһандық тіл ретінде қабылданғандықтан, көптеген адамдар халықаралық қатынас орнату үшін немесе коммуникативтік дағдыларын дамыту үшін ағылшын тілін үйренуде. Шет тілін үйрену – өте күрделі процесс. Тілді үйрену үшін, уақыт пен күш жұмсау талаптарынан бөлек, ұстаздың біліктілігі мен сыныптың ыңғайлы болуы да міндетті, және бұл міндеттер тіл үйренуге кері әсерін алып келуі де мүмкін. Бұл арада студенттердің ағылшын тілін меңгеруіне әлеуметтік-мәдени факторлардың даықпалы бар екенін айта кеткеніміз жөн. Шындығында, шет тілін үйрену әртүрлі өзара әсер ететін және өзара әрекеттесетін факторлардың ықпалында болатын күрделі жүйе болып табылады. Бұл мақала шет тілін меңгеру үрдісіндегі мәдениет, қоғамның тіл үйренудегі сәтсіздіктеріне ықпалы мен себептерін анықтауға бағытталған.

Түйін сөздер: екінші тілді меңгеру, факторлар, құзыреттілік, әлеуметтік-мәдени фактор.

Аннотация. Поскольку английский признан глобальным языком, многие люди изучают английский язык для развития международного общения или коммуникативных навыков. Изучение иностранного языка - очень сложный процесс. Помимо потребности во времени и усилия для изучения языка также требуются квалифицированные преподаватели и хорошая учебная среда, и эти факторы могут негативно повлиять на процесс обучения. В этой статье обсуждаются факторы, которые влияют на лингвистическую компетенцию или знание языка. Социокультурные факторы также играют важную роль в развитии уровня владения английским языком у студентов. На самом деле изучение иностранных языков – это сложная система, которая происходит под влиянием различных взаимовлияющих и взаимодействующих факторов. Данная статья призвана раскрыть особенности культуры, общества в процессе изучения иностранного языка и выявить причины неудачи в изучении языка.

Ключевые слова: приобретение второго языка, компетенция, социокультурные факторы.

Introduction

In 21st century, the interest in learning foreign languages steadily increases and the language of mutual understanding became English language. The importance of learning foreign languages always taken into account in today's society, because knowledge of the language provides opportunities to be successful in terms of economy, commerce, education, and science. In the context of modern educational reality: Kazakhstan's accession to the Bologna agreement and the transition of higher education to a two-stage (bachelor-master) training, it is especially important to improve the efficiency and quality of foreign language teaching in universities of non-linguistic majors [1]. Language training at the University should focus future specialists on the creative nature of upcoming activities, development of 21st century skills such as creative thinking, problem solving, self-development and effective communication at the intercultural level. Professional intercultural communication depends on how well the specialist speaks a foreign language. The new requirements for language training of specialists mean to improve language skills, motivation of students and overcome certain difficulties. Accordingly, foreign language learning is a demanding task. It requires investment of time and effort, a proper learning environment with qualified teachers, strong motivation which force to ease and expedite learning. Language learning includes factors that would affect the process of learning positively and negatively. Growing needs of Kazakh society for specialists, practically fluent in foreign languages and unsatisfactory learning outcomes encourage to investigate the reasons that lead to this situation. In this article, we will talk

about one of the main factors that influence students to learn languages – socio-cultural factor.

Literature review

Language has always been an irreplaceable part of social life, a reflection of culture and the processes occurring in it. S.G. Minasova[2] considers language as a mirror of a culture, it reflects self-consciousness of the people in public, their mentality, national character, lifestyle, traditions, customs, morality, value system, attitude and vision of the world. It is generally accepted that one of the main features of language to exchange and share the information not only within various cultures but also within different social groups.

Culture can be defined as a context of cognitive and affective behavior by Brown (qtd.in Ann)[3]. Majority of scientists accepted language and culture as egg and chicken question, so we cannot separate them. Learners of second language have to develop the knowledge of culture as well as knowledge of the language. Without the awareness of culture and language, there might occur features of cultural shock as misunderstanding, disorientation, frustration, and anxiety. It may cause the decrease of motivation and possible rejection of learning target language. The need of cultural knowledge while learning second language was discussed so many times by a number of researchers. An example of this can be Gaarder and Brock-Utne's[4] statement on learners who learn new language, automatically should learn much about culture of that language. The concepts which have been developed in a language tell us much about the culture in which a particular language is used. For instance, in Eskimos language there are several types of the words that describe snow, whereas in English language there is only single word. Accordingly, Eskimos people may have troubles while learning language of English culture, because there is no more than one concept of the word that they have in their language. It is generally accepted that culture cannot be separated from language and it takes an essential place in teaching and learning process. Pai Obanya[5] noted that allowing the usage of the students' first language to obtain literacy retains not only cultural identity but also facilitates the process of learning. It comes from observation that African students have learning problem in linguistics, because of the language instruction is a language which neither the learner nor the teacher understands and uses well enough. He is not primarily using the cultural argument as an argument for retaining the African languages, but he is using an educational argument. It means learning new culture and language for student who has low level of proficiency is quite difficult, if teacher does not connect student's own cultural views with culture that he is learning. Okonkwo[6] stated that educational programs in Africa gave marginal success at teaching due to the

ignorance of the differences between the language and culture of the school and the language and culture of the learner's community. It is a fact that language and culture of the school are foreign and unfamiliar to the African students, therefore they have troubles in understanding what the teacher is saying to learn. Moreover, they think school learning is nothing for them and they will not satisfy with entering to the university. The main thing that teachers should take into consideration is to promote the understanding of the nature of language and culture of the community. Obviously, foreign thoughts from overseas cultures in an artificially created environment can be conveyed through local languages as well as local tradition and curricular content material can be delivered via foreign languages. Some researchers think providing literacy in L1 will be preserved cultural heritage of a learner while Pardeep [7] argues that if learners use L1 unduly, it distracts learners' attention from learning foreign language. Rival [8] states that "no culture can be reduced to its linguistic expression." Sapir [9] concluded that language can be viewed as a way to describe and represent human experience and perception of the world, and members of a language community share systems of beliefs and assumptions which underlie their constructions of the world. Language and culture of its speakers cannot be analyzed in isolation. Thus, cultural factors also should be taken into account while learning second language. A lot of people with different cultural backgrounds are learning English to accomplish their goals. Apparently, cultural and social differences will influence them to think and acquire language differently. Investigations on socio-cultural factors influencing learner's language proficiency are not studied well and they are few. These researchers based on just action research or cases. During exploration of socio-cultural factors, it was revealed that it's better to study them in not isolated way. On the contrary, some researchers studied other individual factors like aptitude, motivation, or age and have assumed that each element can be studied in isolation as fragmented factors. University teacher faces with a number of challenges while instructing students and there are different factors make the course difficult to teach [7].

Obviously, attitude of particular cultural groups toward another may affect target language learners' motivation. According to Spolsky (cited in Ann) [3] cultures which are somehow similar can have increased social contact, vice versa cultures who doesn't have congruence they do not. For example, let's see French and German languages, they have the same word *bon appetite*, but it doesn't mean the same thing for each of these culture representatives. The misunderstandings will developed when there is a conversation among two different cultures' representatives. According Scollon, for Asians delayed introduction of topics accepted as normal, while Western students got confused. Every culture has own traditions, norms and

rules to follow. There are four categories of norms which are described by Hofstede (cited in Ann)[3]:

- Individualism vs. Collectivism
- Power Distance
- Uncertainty Avoidance
- Masculinity vs. Femininity

Ann [30] has found European learners speak out more in class than Asian learners. Learners of Australia, Italy, France, Germany have a tendency for collectivism whereas China, Korean and Japan learners for individualism. It means they like to work in pairs, groups while Asians just learn for themselves, so they are more competitive than Europeans. Teachers should use good strategy to make each person take part in and speak. Power Distance refers to the status of the people. It is generally believed that Asian people like power than Europeans because every people want to become a boss. Chinese teachers accept their profession as must to teach students, while Australian develops lecture learning process. It can be explained that Australian teachers want to develop individual learning, teach to students not so much rely on teachers. Uncertainty avoidance refers to the things or events which are not structured and certain. For instance, Korean students prefer more structured classroom and activities, they demand from teacher to give the "right" answer to all questions, than French students. Importance of success and competition mostly related to the masculinity whereas cooperation and negotiation is for femininity. Tucker & Lambert (cited in Yuri) [10] believed that successful learners of second language should develop "an awareness of and sensitivity toward the values and traditions of the people whose language is being studied". The term culture in foreign language classroom means introducing typical customs or values, traditions of the given society. Let's assume that instructor will explain to students some customs or social rules related to certain culture, for instance Japanese culture has social rule such when you receive a present, do not open it in front of the giver but instead just put it aside. Additionally, the same situation with a gift also accepted in such way in Kazakh culture, whereas European society tends to open gift in front of the giver. As for teaching English language, there may occur some problems about which cultures to introduce. English is not the property of certain gathering of individuals; therefore it can be challengeable for teachers to teach particular culture. The trouble of picking a culture to teach has been expressed by Moorjani and Field (cited in Yuri) [10]: The heterogeneity of these social orders is in itself a huge hindrance in the educating of culture, for it forces upon us a decision that must be made on ideological grounds: what culture do we teach, or, rather, whose culture do we hold up as a model? It was viewed that teachers needn't to identify the culture; it is enough for students to build knowledge about their own culture. Instructing a taught middle class etymological

repertory, we should coherently to choose for social teaching the "distinction" culture that this shape of dialect subtends. Some researchers should be simplified and idealized in language teaching will be adverse when we are concerned with culture, for it decreases the target world to a one-dimensional exaggeration. Thus, in order to understand the other's culture individual must exceed one's own culture [which] can be done only by making explicit the rules by which it operates". Clear dichotomy between native and non-native speakers of the language can be another problem of teaching language from a cultural perspective. Individual should to choose the non-native speakers ought to adjust to the local speakers standard of dialect utilize or designs of communication [11]. Some foreign and second language learners have already developed the awareness about own culture and language, so it means they have first language competency.

The concept of "factor" (lat. factor-making, producing) is defined as the cause, the driving force of any process, determining the nature or its individual features, mechanisms and stages of its course. Factors are the environment of influence on students in the learning process. In modern society, to have the knowledge of English language will not only allow communicating with interlocutors but also will allow taking worthy place in the world community. This need creates an important social and political background, a favorable environment for the realization of the social task in relation to teaching a foreign language, for organizational and meaningful restructuring of the learning process. It was revealed that the motives for choosing engineering and economical specialties can be divided into certain groups such as cognitive, professional and social groups of motives. Analyzing the data obtained from the study of the motives of choosing the non-linguistic specialties, researchers noted that the factors that positively affect the formation of general professional competencies can be defined in three groups: "psychological group" factors, group "socio-economic" factors, and group "pedagogical factors.

In modern world, a person is a part of society and constantly interacts with other individuals, and social factor is a distinctive feature of this. The social factor defined as a driving force for the development of a society, a phenomenon or process that causes certain social changes. The basis for selection of the social factor is such a relationship of social objects in which causes under certain conditions, necessarily generate other social objects or their consequences. Social factor is primarily the activity of people, which ultimately determines the whole diversity of social life of society. According to Omelechko[12] social factor is the conditions in which a specific language exists and develops. Based on this definition, it is obvious that the development of any language is not entirely antonomous, since it depends to some extent on the development of society. Additionally, all social factors have different linguistic feature or significance. As an example of it can be

global social factor that changes the composition of native speakers which lead to changes in lexico-semantic system, syntax, phonetics and morphology of the language. However, private factors determine the development of only a few levels. Changing strategies for mastering a language is a good example of a factor that is described above. It is essential to mention that the social factor has its own fundamental structure. The main element of the social factor structure include: a) the subject of the action; b) the environment with which the subject is connected; c) the means of the action; d) the goals and objectives of the action; e) the object of impact; f) the environment to which the object of action is ranked. Alefirenko[13] refers to the existence of the varieties of social factors. The main social factors of the development and functioning of a language are social factors a) determined by socio-economic formations; b) due to the education system and mass communication; c) limited by various interpretations of the phenomena of nature and public life by representatives of religious ideology; d) deterministic language interaction; e) scientific and educational value; f) moral and ethical understanding of different phenomena of social life; g) social and professional differentiation of the language.

Sociolinguistics is a branch of linguistics which deals with the existence and development of language. It studies the relationship between language and facts of social life, active processes in the development of language under the influence of extralinguistic factors. Social factors imply a combination of external circumstances within which a language develops and functions: a society of people that uses this language, social structure of a given society, distinctive age characteristics between native speakers, distinctive features in terms of social status, level of culture and education, places of residence as well as distinctive characteristics in their speech behaviour, depending on the situation in which communication takes place. Boduen-de-Curtene[14] states that since language is possible only in human society, we must always note psychic side as well as social side of a person. It means the basis of linguistics should be not only individual psychology, but also sociology.

Socio-cultural factors consider sociocultural context of learning for foreign language, the concept of which includes such categories as the commonness\ difference of the culture of the country of the language being studied and the initial culture of the learners; remoteness\ proximity of the country of the language being studied from the country in which the target language is studied. Along with this, sociocultural conditions are determined by the prevailing attitude in the society towards people, speaking in one or another foreign language, their culture and society. Status of the language, its connection with other languages, accordance of cultures is considered as aspects of socio-cultural factors. It means the status or importance of certain

language, relation of this language with others, correspondence of cultures may influence someone's motivation to learn foreign language or not.

Methodology

This chapter gives a detailed description of the methods that will be used to carry out the study. It includes the research design appropriate for this study followed by the target population from which possible findings from the study will be generalized and sampling techniques will be used. It provides data collection tools which will be used in this study.

Research Design

This research adopts a research design that will be exploratory sequential design, it means initial data will be based on qualitative study, and then on the analysis of qualitative study will be collected quantitative data. Mixed Approach will help to collect relevant and valid information for current study. Data collection tools such as interview, questionnaire, observation.

Participants

The target population of the study will be students of non-linguistic department at Suleyman Demirel University. Sixty 2nd and 1st year students of Engineering faculty will be observed. A sample is part of the population that has been procedurally selected to represent the population once the sample has been scientifically taken, the result can be generalized to the entire population.

Data collection

Interview will be conducted from learners of non-linguistic majors in each faculty about their success or failure in English and their views what kind of factors may influence in it. After getting and analyzing qualitative data, there will be used statistical regression analysis to see the new factors. Data will be generated from interview, questionnaire and discussions which will be recorded in Dictaphone. With the help of questionnaire, the study wants to identify the new factors influencing students of non-linguistic department.

Ethical issues

Human beings are different and researcher should take into account these diversities and provide as much as possible suitable research procedure for them. Researcher will consider all learners' opinions and views. Participants of the study will be sampled with a help of teacher and from students will be asked whether they will participate or not. There is no force.

Conclusion

At the beginning of the XXI century a foreign language became an important tool of international communication and the time has come, when the demand to English language is increasing and feeling a sharp necessity

in the specialists of different spheres. Obviously, humanity based teachers will have a knowledge of using English for specific purposes and don't possess appropriate subject knowledge. Teachers' role to engage learner's attention and be aware of subject area, also teacher should be able to develop and adapt to teaching methods which are suited to student's needs. To conclude, this paper presents information about factors and it would be helpful for teachers of non-linguistic department to strengthen or weaken particular factors.

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