



THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIOCULTURAL FACTORS ON STUDENT'S SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION IN UZBEKISTAN

Yulduzkhon KHODJAEVA

Senior teacher

Bucheon University in Tashkent

khodjayevayulduzkhon@gmail.com

Abstract. *This article analyzes the effects of sociomadic factors on students studying a foreign language in detail. The study outlines how factors such as family support, peer influence, and social class influence foreign language acquisition based on examples, scientific research, and the educational context of Uzbekistan.*

Keywords: *foreign language learning, sociocultural factors, family influence, peer influence, social class.*

Introduction

What are sociocultural factors and how they affect the way non-native learners acquire the second language? The question, which resulted in growing interest among researchers in the sphere of foreign language teaching led to several studies and in-depth analysis about the impact of sociocultural elements on second language learners. As the vast majority of researchers were focused only on psychological factors and their importance on language learning, it was Jamous & Chik (2012), who presumed the fact that particular set of sociocultural factors can improve the way learner acquires a foreign language in great extent. Since then, researchers all over the world conducted a great deal of researches to delve into the concept of sociocultural circumstances that stimulate and develop language proficiency of a second language from completely new perspective and divided sociocultural factors into several sub-groups, which were later analyzed and compared in detail with the help of collected data during each study.

Understanding the influence of sociocultural elements in second language acquisition is important not only for foreign researchers, but also has its educational value for representatives of foreign language teaching sector in Uzbekistan, because in recent years there has been a great demand for educating youngsters, who know multiple languages except the native one. That is why careful investigation of these elements helps language teachers in Uzbekistan to get to know which sociocultural factors matter and how they influence the way non-native learners develop a foreign language proficiency in the process of creating innovative teaching methods and relevant language learning materials. In-depth investigations of the field revealed three sociocultural aspects such as the family influence, peer impact and social class that facilitate second language learning among students.

The family influence and second language acquisition

The family role is a key socio-cultural influence, which shapes L2 learning in students. Support of family and having a successful family member as a role model are key motivators for students not only in Uzbekistan, but also in many other countries in terms of language learning. According to Kormos et al (2011), who conducted a large study of



students at secondary school in Chile, family member's encouragement and praise has a major impact on learner's motivation (cited in Han, 2017). Authors point out that family is a key factor in forming student's attitude toward learning a new language, setting the goals, and encouraging the efforts of a learner in the process of reaching these goals. That is to say, family members being those, who surround a learner in every stage of second language acquisition inspire him to keep on striving for learning, even when he struggles in some aspects of second language.

Having successful family member as a role model is another family-related factor in Uzbekistan that provokes learner to succeed in L2 acquisition. Parents, siblings or other representatives of extended family can act as a role model within the home setting and contribute to shape language learning motivation in student. A case in point is the study, which was conducted in Vietnam. Pham (2016), who was a researcher in this study, reports that over 75 percent of students, who participated in Vietnamese study said that they had a great desire to develop a language skill concerning their second language as their siblings did. Moreover, some participants of the study strongly believed that if their siblings managed to succeed in L2 learning, they could do it as well. It means that having a family member as an exemplar of a good second language proficiency stimulate students active learning. Taking into account strong ties between family members in Uzbekistan and the analysis of family role on student's success in target language, it can be understood that both family encouragement and taking a family member as a shining example of a good language learner have substantial effect on students.

Peer impact as a trigger of effective language learning

Peer impact is another major sociocultural factor that affect acquiring a second language by students in Uzbekistan. In most cases peer influence in Uzbek schools happens in form of peer competition, when students strive to surpass their counterparts in particular aspects of language learning and achieve their own language learning related goals. While defining the role of peer impact Pham (2016), English language lecturer at University of Economics and Law in Vietnam, states "if a context in which the majority of peers were at similar levels, students did not feel the immediate need to improve their language skills". In other words, peer competition in the language learning classes is indispensable, because it encourages students to study hard in order to have progress and better results in language learning in comparison with their peers. Furthermore, competitive language learning in the classroom can prepare learners for following competitions in their real lives when they graduate the school and start their independent life (Afzalimir & Safa, 2021). Indeed, developing competitiveness during second language learning classes can prepare learners to face challenges in modern competitive world. However, peer's role in student's language enhancement in Uzbekistan is not all about being competitors. The phenomenon of peer interaction is also crucial in enhancement of second language acquisition. In the classroom setting peers are those, who enhance language development of a learner by sharing knowledge with a student. Large number of second language acquisition theories highlighted the importance of input during the student-student interaction in the classroom. In one of these theories, it is said that during the lesson students not only "produce the language, but also acquire new linguistic material from their peers as input". (Tavares, 2016). The theory was resulted



in the creation of Interaction Hypothesis by Long (1981). In this hypothesis interaction is the key element of second language, because of the fact that while engaged in conversation partners repeat particular words or phrases, use confirmation or comprehension checks which in turn leads to better understanding of an input.

However, there is a case that can hinder the process of peer interaction such as the dominance of native speaker peers in the classroom. When the vast majority of peers are native speakers, the language learner cannot express himself freely because of the huge language proficiency gap between him and native speakers. A typical example for is the schools in Uzbekistan and primarily in Tashkent that educated in Russian language during Soviet Union. In some classes of Russian schools, the majority of learners were Russians, which resulted in less interaction between native speaker peers and non-native learners because of language barrier in first years of education. But in modern Uzbekistan, aforesaid barriers can occur rarely, thus the importance of peer interaction in second language acquisition is also actual for Uzbek context.

The role of social class in second language development

The economic status of students is another sociocultural factor that greatly results in their foreign language learning. In recent years, there has been observed a huge socioeconomic inequality within the society in almost all countries of the globe and Uzbekistan is not an exception. There are many standpoints on the impact of economic background of family on second language enhancement. Black (2020) states that financial inequalities result in social class effect, which makes parents with lower income send their children to schools that are considered as the 'second best.' In other words, the privileged families have financial opportunity to give their children to prestigious educational establishments with in-depth learning of second language, in comparison with their counterparts from less-privileged family backgrounds, whose kids have to attend public schools, where the quality of language teaching is not as high as it is in private ones. The same trend can be observed in Uzbekistan as well. Taking into account that the vast majority of private schools are based on foreign educational program, the primary goal of them is to teach multiple languages using high quality, innovative and interactive teaching methods. However, there are others ways how social class can impact on student's language development. One of them is the influence of social background on the level of teacher-student interaction in the classroom. In his study related to social class and educational inequality, Ray (2006) explains how teachers can marginalize attitude towards children from low-income families and how it impacts language learning motivation of a learner. Indeed, teacher's attitude to student results is facilitation or discouragement of learning a second language. Being isolated from others or receiving less attention and support from a language teacher may lead to negative attitude towards learning and hinder the process of language development. Thus, it is important to educate professional and competent language teachers in Uzbekistan, who will not discriminate pupils based on their socio-economic background, but support them in all stages of language learning.

Conclusion

Second language learning is long and sophisticated process and it is naturally that there can be great variation in terms of foreign language learning achievement among

Uzbek students. As Breen (2001) states in his article titled "Learner Contribution to Language Learning", despite the fact that learners of first language always have almost the same level of language proficiency, the situation in second language acquisition is completely different, even when students learn the same materials and receive the similar knowledge and exposure. Multiple examples given in this case study were intended to explain the reasons for this variation by disclosing a set of sociocultural factors that impact on learner's acquisition of non-native language both in positive or negative way. Understanding the importance of sociocultural elements in foreign language development is extremely significant for Uzbek teachers, because it gives a new perspective for transforming the process of teaching languages. Moreover, in-depth comprehension of how parental support, peer interaction and economic status of a learner can shape second language development can be the first step for creating effective teaching approaches and applicable teaching materials that can help to improve student's linguistic achievement. Additionally, analyzing the sociocultural factors will help teacher to develop the skills of creating positive classroom environment by promoting healthy competition among learners.

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