Sociocultural Pathology of English Language Teaching: A Case Study of Home Culture Attachment, Cultural Intelligence, Politeness, and Cultural Adaptability

Mahshid Rezaeyan
M.A. Candidate in TFEL, Shahid Bahonar University of Kerman, Kerman, Iran

Shima Ghahari
Assistant professor of TEFL, Shahid Bahonar University of Kerman, Kerman, Iran

Mahdi Dahmardeh
Assistant professor of TEFL, University of Tehran, Tehran, Iran

Received: 26.01.2016 Accepted: 08.12.2017

Extended Abstract

1. Introduction

In the 1950s, Sapir and Whorf suggested that the cultural concepts and categories inherent in different languages determine their cognitive classification, making speakers of different languages think and behave differently. Since then, the topic of teaching and learning second/foreign language (L2) and the role of culture in L2 instructions have been a matter of considerable interest among language educators, with a particular focus on language learners’ identity. With the increasing use of English on the global scale, many L2 learners have developed a sense of cosmopolitan identity as a member of global community (Ghahari, 2015; Sung, 2013). Some researchers, on the other hand, have reported that L2 learners display their first language (L1) identities (e.g., Canagarajah, 2005; Kitao, 2008). There are still other studies which have discovered the possibility of constructing glocal or hybrid identities (e.g., Sung, 2014). However, the existing studies have examined the concept of identity in relation to accent (e.g., Sung, 2013), L2 proficiency level (e.g., Khodadady & Ghahari, 2012), in language institutes (e.g., Pishghadam & Saboori, 2011), and from L2 instructors’ viewpoint (e.g., Pishghadam & Sadeghi, 2011). Therefore, the present research examined sociocultural identity of L2 learners’ at college-level in terms of home culture attachment (HCA), cultural adaptation (CA), culture quotient (CQ), and politeness.

2. Methodology

The data were collected via the administration of multiple measures and checklists to English (n=98) and non-English (n=95) major students at two universities. The checklists included home culture attachment (r=0.75), pragmatic skills (r=0.71),

1. Corresponding Author: ghahary@uk.ac.ir
cultural quotient (r=0.72), and cultural adaptation (r=0.68). Thus, the study followed a 4 × 2 factorial design.

3. Discussion
The results of a one-way ANOVA demonstrated that the English group was the higher achiever in terms of CQ and politeness and the lower achiever in HCA domain compared with the non-English group. Respecting the outperformance of L2 learners in cultural quotient, the nature of L2 learning as a means to promote communicative competence and intercultural competence needs to be taken into account (Kern & Kramsch, 2014). Intercultural competence is defined as the ability to deal with the differences which are derived from everyday communication (Magos & Simopoulos, 2009). Hence, the development of intercultural competence enables L2 learners to observe other people’s behaviors, reflect on their own culture in the light of others’, and cooperate more effectively with people from other cultures.

Another strength of L2 learners was at the level of politeness. In order to use language appropriately, L2 learners need a fair command of pragmalinguistic and socio-pragmatic competencies (Brown & Levinson, 1987) to avoid being considered rude by native speakers. This will lead them to become more aware of the target culture norms, to recognize the relationships and differences between the target and their own cultural norms, and finally, to be more sensitive toward them.

One possible explanation for the L2 students’ degree of alienation could be identity conflict. Although it is less severe than identity conflicts in English as second language environments, identity conflict is mainly created in EFL contexts by the pedagogic textbooks and materials and could gradually lead L2 learners to observe their home culture more critically (Pishghadam & Sadeghi, 2011).

4. Conclusions
The present study aimed to shed light on the impact of L2 learning on learners’ sociocultural identity in the globalization era. The ultimate results indicated the presence of English goes beyond utilitarian values, encompassing a range of benefits in L2 learners’ lives and social skills. Yet, the impact of English for individuals is multiplex and mutually re-enforcing, having negative consequences as such. Finally, university instructors are advised to adopt a reflective, interpretive, socioculturally grounded, and politically engaged L2 pedagogy in order to enable L2 learners to realize and appreciate the values of other cultures while maintaining and enriching their own.

Keywords: Cultural Adaptation, Cultural Quotient, English Language Learning, Globalization, Home Culture Attachment, Linguistic Relativism, Politeness
References (In Persian)


References (In English)


