



RESEARCH PAPER

Age and Parental Role: Social Factors Involved in the English Language Learning in Pashtun Society

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ABSTRACT

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This study presents an investigation carried out with learners enrolled in English language courses from the National University of Modern Languages, Peshawar (NUML). The study is based on the qualitative pattern. The primary purpose of the study is to discover two social factors that affect the English language learning process in Pashtun society and to find out Pashtun learners' personal interest in the English language. The researchers analyzed and interpreted the collected data from the participants, and data was collected through a questionnaire based on the Attitude/Motivation Test Battery by Gardner (2004). Through this study, factors such as parental role and age have been proven to be central in the language learning process of Pashtun learners.

Introduction

Linguistics is a scientific study of a language, as it is used in society. The central purpose of linguistics is how language is invented, then developed, how it constantly changes, how humans acquire language and how other languages can influence a language. These and other types of questions are answered in the field of linguistics. This study touches on the area of how one language affects another language in terms of social aspects. There can be many reasons for learning a second or foreign language. In many societies, people do learn a second or foreign language(s) for different purposes. Because of differences in cultures and societies, one can never learn a foreign language like a native speaker. These cultures and societies vary from region to region. Every region has its social norms, and these social factors affect one's first

language and second or foreign language. Hence the researchers' focus is on the social factors of the Pashto language, which, one way or the other, influence the English language and its use in Pashtun society. In Pashtun society, English is learned for different purposes. For example, it is learned for academic purposes, jobs and business, etc.

People learn a foreign/second language, and this process is called L2/foreign language learning. This paper describes how one can learn a foreign language and how a learner reaches the ultimate level of the target language decided by social factors. Society plays a significant and dominant role in the development of an individual's language. Every society or community has its style or way of using its language. Society and culture always affect the way of using the language of a speaker. So this study is related explicitly to Linguistics' term "sociolinguistics". We can define sociolinguistics as *the study of language and society or the relation between language and society*. Sociolinguistics describes that how social environment and social norms affect the speech of a person. It is an understood phenomenon that language is closely related to society (Albert C. Bough). The branch of linguistics which studies the relationship of language with society is known as sociolinguistics. This branch studies language use, its functions and its varieties according to different social and cultural norms of a society. The major topics studied in sociolinguistics are dialects, register, isogloss, jargon, language planning, diglossia and language culture relationship, and language thought relationship.

When we talk about the relationship of language with society, we sometimes ignore the effects of other languages rather than foreign languages on the language used in a particular society. There are so many factors that can influence second language learning. These factors may be social, cultural, economic, religious, and so many and so forth. The study underhand is mainly related to social factors that hinder learning English in Pashtun society. The researchers are concerned with the Social factors of Pashto at English Language University in Peshawar. The university provides learners with different language courses. There are many social factors, i.e. age, socioeconomic context and linguistics background.

Language learning is the most crucial phenomenon in education research these days. Many methods and approaches are introduced for effective teaching. Other areas like Error Analysis and student or learner importance are also under consideration in modern times. The importance is also given to the material used for language teaching, whether in the syllabus or AVAIDs. Of all these factors and aspects of language learning and teaching, the most important one is the learner as all the setup is to facilitate the learner, to teach the learner. If the learner is not getting anything in the classroom, all the other aspects are useless. The question is what learner thinks about learning, their social background, and how s (he) feels in a particular setting—i.e. classroom. Therefore the researchers have selected this area. The main focus of the study is on the social factors that can hinder or facilitate learning a language.

Literature Review

If one talks about English language learning in Pashtun society, many factors can be highlighted. i.e., motivation, gender, age, attitude, culture, parental and teachers' role. Many other factors also affect learners' learning the language skills they need to learn in a foreign language. Many researchers have worked on this phenomenon. For example, Luke Prodromou (1992) tried to find out the importance of factors and started studying inter-cultural factors in language learning to investigate the influential aspects of bicultural learning. For instance, the cultural context of the lesson, students' perceptions, among others. He revealed that it is indispensable to have some knowledge about the target culture, and also it will be helpful to develop an interest in learning the target language. Mehrdad Rezaee, from Azad University, Iran, (2012) studied sociocultural factors of the second language. It is all about the social factors that have a relation with language learning. The writers concluded that this study considered vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar to learn or teach a second/foreign language. Sociocultural aspects should be taken into account.

Rezaee (2012) writes, social/cultural factors are thoroughly different from one language from other languages. It can be opposite from one's native language, or even it may be absent; that is why it is suggested that social and cultural factors must be taught to the language learners. In Malaysia, Reza Gholami from Putra (2012) discovered that social context indirectly affects second language learning. The study tries to discover that social context plays a significant role in the second language learning process. Gholami concludes that social context influences the attitude and motivation of the learners very strongly. And this effect enhances the outcomes of the learners at the end as well. According to this research, it is safe to say that social interaction is constructive with native speakers of the target language while learning the target language. According to the researcher, in some places, sometimes the importance of the social context is ignored, or sometimes it is not given much importance.

Another work, Bilal Genc and ErdoganBada from Çukurova University in Turkey (2005) conducted research to determine the relationship of culture with the language learning process. In this research, the researcher selected different ELT department learners to find out learners' standpoints related to the effects of the culture class which was attended by them already. They figured out that a culture class is beneficial for learning language skills, learning about culture, developing a positive attitude towards the culture and society, and contributing to teaching a language. So, teaching the target culture helps learners improve their language skills and develops learners' interests. Regarding the effects of the learners' cultural background, Merce` Bernaus, Anne-Marie Masgoret, Robert Gardner and Edith Reyes from the University of Barcelona (2004) conducted research. The researchers tried to reveal the effect of the culture in the language learning process of immigrant children. They selected 114 learners, ages of the selected learners were 6 to 12; the selected

participants filled the questionnaire based on Gardner's Attitude- Motivation Test Battery. They presented their attitudes, motivation and anxiety towards language learning. At the final stage, it was found that there were few differences attributable to the cultural background. The conclusion was the cause of few differences existed of cultural background. It is safe to say that motivation plays a vital role in a language learning process, so Masanori Matsumoto, from Bond University, Australia, researched the changing of motivation and its effects while learning in the environment where learners belong to different cultures. The writers selected 140 learners enrolled in foreign languages courses in Australia to find out whether their motivation is affected by differences in cultural background or not. The researcher also intended to investigate different aspects of the learners' cultures because they all belong to different cultural backgrounds. The research figured out that cultural background strongly influences learners' motivation in both ways, positively or negatively.

Also, it was concluded that learners' native language positively influences the learning process of a second language, even though there is a gap between their first language and the target language. On the other hand, according to this research, it is safe to say that it is still difficult to figure out the exact connection of cultural background to learners' motivational traits. According to the writer, it is all about the learners' perception of different things presented within a daily environment. That can positively and negatively affect learners' motivation, which means motivational strength can be enhanced and weakened.

Linguistic Background

The first language plays a significant role in learning a second/foreign language. The first language can affect the learning process both negatively and positively. When L1 of a learner and the target language share similar characteristics, it may benefit the learning process. It helps learners make relations that facilitate linguistic structures while different language patterns with no similarities will affect the learning process; this is called the first/native language Effect. Regarding this, Brown (2001) claims that: Learner's first language strongly affects the target language's learning process. However, the first structure will facilitate and interfere in the production and comprehension of the target language.

On the other hand, generally, it interferes in the learning process." (p. 66). Indeed, the effects of the native language are present in the acquisition of the target language until the learner comes to the level of competence of internalization of the language. At this stage, the level of interference becomes lowered. An instructor needs to instruct the learners into the positive path and guide them to reduce the negative interference of the native language "if a learner focuses on the positive aspects of the first language and ignores the aspects which interfering so the learner would be successful in learning the target language." Brown (2001, p. 66). Hence, learners will succeed in the language learning process if they explore more about the target language and are aware of every facilitating effect of the native language.

Linguistic Background of Pashto

The Pashto language is spoken by all of the Pashtuns. Pashto is also found to be named Afghani in older literature. This language belongs to Eastern Iran and Indo-Iranian languages, a sub-group of the Indo-European family of languages. There are two official languages in Afghanistan, one is Pashto, and the other is Zuban-e-Dari. It is the second-largest regional language spoken by Pashtuns in Pakistan in the west and northwest. There are probable 45-60 million speakers of Pashto worldwide (Penzl, Herbert: *Ismael Sloan 2009 a grammar of Pashto a Descriptive Study of the Dialect of Kandahar, Afghanistan*. p.210)

East, south and southwest of Afghanistan are the areas where this language is spoken. It is also spoken in a few places of the west and the north. In Pakistan, it is one of the provincial languages, and like other provincial and regional languages, Pashto has no official status. About 15.42% of the population of Pakistan speaks Pashto as their first language. (Government of Pakistan: *population by Mother Tongue Pakistan Bureau of Statistics*) and is spoken in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, the Federally Administered Tribal Areas, north of Balochistan and the Mainwali and Attock districts of the Punjab province.

Language Acquisition

According to Archibald, as mentioned in O'Grady (1997), Second language acquisition is how one can learn or be proficient in a language that is not their native language. According to Archibald, many research studies and works have presented different theories, perspectives and ideas about second language acquisition. And still, many scholars are interested in this phenomenon to discover satisfactory and logical answers to some of the curiosities regarding second language acquisition. The basic idea was to advance language teaching; then, a great interest in studying this phenomenon was developed by Psychology and Linguistics. According to other research, in second language acquisition, many different aspects will strengthen or weaken it. The dominant factors or aspects can be age, socioeconomic context, and linguistic background, affective and cognitive factors. The differences in age and social background can affect the outcomes of learners in second language acquisition. It's a common belief that younger people can learn a second language better than adults; According to Saddeghi (2013), early age strongly affects the final level of the learner's outcome in language acquisition.

Age

According to Saddeghi (2013), there are two different cases regarding age. First, a second language can be learned more efficiently and effectively in childhood than in adulthood and adolescence. The second idea is that a second language can be learned better and effectively in adulthood, which means adults are more efficient learners than children. Other writers, for example, Khalifa (2012), agrees that age is a factor in second language learning because learning at an early age shows better

performance of the learner. Further, he cites Snow (1993) and Taylor (1990), who worked on the same idea that revealed that if the second language is learned at an early age, the learner will be more fluent in the second language. They figured out that their performance was much better for foreign language learners who started learning at 5 or 6. Some many researchers and authors agree with this general idea. According to Archibald, as mentioned in O'Grady (1997), people learn languages for specific purposes at different points in their lives. There is another idea called the "critical period hypothesis". This idea says that one can learn a language in a particular period; otherwise, a language cannot be entirely learned if the critical period of the learner is over already. In the same way, O'Grady points out one of the most exciting issues to be discussed in the study of language acquisition. According to researchers, phonological and grammatical aspects can be affected if a learner does not start language development early.

Socioeconomic Context

Social background also plays a significant role in learning a second or foreign language because language learners learn a language in different contexts. Pishghadam (2011) cited the works of Williams and Burden (1997). He discovered that social context could not be ignored in language learning as it develops learners' capacity to know how to be proficient Learners. A learner's approach to their culture and their social relationship with parents, siblings, teachers, and friends can strongly affect whether, how, and what an individual learns a second language. It revealed that the role of society is considerable in second/foreign language learning. Pishghadam (2011) agrees that researchers generally agree that individuals' educational outcomes are affected by their different social and cultural experiences. For that, English language teachers must support the idea introduced by Pishghadam (2011) because the educational system aims to strengthen social inequalities by judging the different competencies of different learners with different social and cultural backgrounds. The language instructors should know that a learner cannot understand a language instruction apart from their social class. Social backgrounds in many different shapes surround language learners, according to Pishghadam (2011), close friends, parents' presence at home, siblings, extracurricular activities, religious activities, parents' knowledge and involvement in children's education. These sources are significant to provide the required contribution they need in their educational achievements. Pishghadam (2011) suggested that those language learners who own more cultural supplies and have comparatively more access to social networks and institutions can achieve more education.

Material and Methods

The study has been conducted in Peshawar, where native speakers of the Pashto language live primarily with some people using other languages like Urdu and Hindko. These people are mostly educated as it is one of the big cities in Pakistan. The researchers have selected this area because they could find EFL learners easily in this area. There is a National University of Modern languages campus, where many students learn English as a foreign language. The researchers have selected her sample

from this campus, where students come from different social and linguistic backgrounds.

Procedure

Data were collected from 60 participants through a Questionnaire. It was based on the Attitude/Motivation Test Battery by Gardner (2004). The questionnaire was in English, and it has not been translated into any other regional language. There are three types of questions in the questionnaire: age, parental role, and personal interest in English. There are 12 statements on the scale of (Agree, Disagree and Neuter) and two questions are about age. The age at which they started learning the English language at, and what is their current age? In the following table, the collected data is given.

Data Collection

Data were collected from 60 participants. Following is the table in which the Questions of the questionnaire are given. And there are some of the options (Agree, Disagree and Neuter), which are the participants' opinions. The number of participants is given in the columns.

There are five columns in this table for different categories. In the first column, the serial numbers of the questions are given; in the 2nd column, actual questions are given, and the 3rd, 4th and 5th columns are for different scales (Agree, Disagree and Neuter).

Results and Discussion

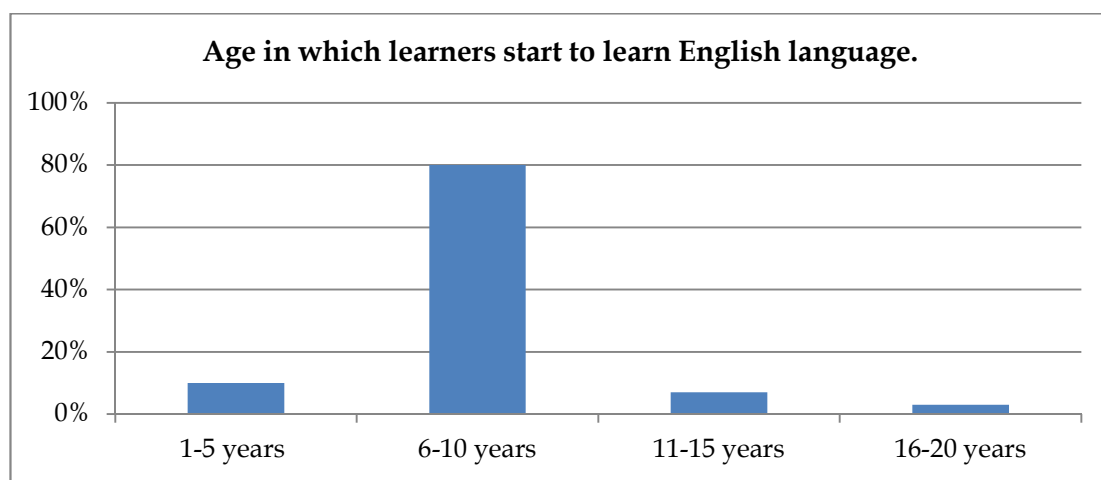
Table 1

S. No	Questions of questionnaire	Agree	Disagree	Neutral
1.	My parents try to help me to learn English.	32	6	22
2.	Learning English is really great.	55	0	5
3.	I have a strong desire to know all aspects of English.	45	4	9
4.	Studying foreign languages is not enjoyable.	5	45	10
5.	I wish I could read newspapers and magazines in many foreign languages.	44	7	9
6.	My parents think that it is very important for me to learn English.	52	3	5
7.	Studying English is important because it will make me more educated.	43	5	12
8.	My parents feel that I should continue studying English all through school.	46	2	12
9.	English is a very important part of the school programme.	58	0	2

10.	My parents urge me to seek help from my teachers if I have any problem with my English.	39	2	19
11.	My parents are very interested in everything I do in my English class.	31	6	23
12.	My parents encouraged me to learn English.	48	2	10

Age

The graph given below reveals the learners' age at which they start to learn English.



In the graph above, it is possible to observe that Pashtun learners start to learn the English language early. And these learners are enrolled in different English courses. Most of the learners are 18 to 25 years old currently. Because in Pakistan, English is taught from the very start in the schools, but as a subject, not as a language, learners have to go for English language courses where they are taught English as a language.

Parental Role

These social aspects revealed a positive response of Pashtun parents. Most of the learners do agree with this point that their parents do help them to learn English. That means in Pashtun society, parents want their children to learn English. Their attitude towards English language learning is utterly favourable. Parents in Pashtun society think that it's worth learning English nowadays. That's why they try their best efforts to help their children to learn the English language. And also, most of the learners agree that their parents feel that learning English is very important for their children. We learned previously that Pashtun parents are concerned with learning the English language. Parents think that learning English is essential and beneficial

nowadays. They think that their children can get benefits in their lives by learning this language.

Now one can say that Pashtun parents are supportive of their children. They want to support their children, and they do as well, which is a positive point. It shows that parents are the source of motivation in this case.

Parents want their children to continue studying this language; as we learned previously, Pashtun parents are concerned about learning English. Parents think that learning English is essential and beneficial nowadays. Parents support their children to practice the English language. That's why they feel that learners should continue learning English all through school. It is safe to state that Pashtun parents are supportive of their children. They want to support their children, and they do as well, which is a positive point. It shows that parents are the source of motivation in this case.

As we learned from the collected data result, parents are concerned with their children's English. They are strongly desired for their children regarding the learning of the English language. Parents want to know their children's problems regarding their English, and they want their children to share their problems with their English instructors to solve them. Parents urge their children to share their problems regarding their English. It means that they want their children to learn this language thoroughly.

According to the collected data, most learners agreed that their parents are interested in everything they do in their English class. It means that they want their children to be active in English class and participate in different activities. In English class, activities can be four language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Parents want their children to be experts in all of the language skills, which is why parents want to know whether their children are taking an interest or not. And if they have any problem regarding any of the skills of the language, then they must consult their Language instructor to solve their problem.

Personal Interest

It is clear that in Pashtun society, people appreciate learning of English language. Because they believe that it is worth learning nowadays, they know the value of this language. There was no one to disagree with this point. It revealed that learning the English language seems to be significant according to Pashtun learners. There are so many different reasons for learning this language. Some learners want to learn it because they like to speak it, and some want to learn because of practical purposes (for job etc.). And there are so many other purposes and reasons.

So in simple words, Pashtun learners are motivated to learn English, and their attitude is favourable.

"All aspects of English" means all rules, regulations, grammar, and dialects and accents of the English. Pashtun learners strongly desire to know all aspects of English. Learners want to learn and know everything about the English language, which means they desire to speak this language and write in this language.

They certainly enjoy studying foreign languages and, more specifically, the English language. Nowadays, Pashtuns are very broad-minded. They are desired to know other languages as well. They started to give value to foreign languages.

Pashtun learners don't want to be stuck to the Pashto language only and want to know and learn other foreign languages and, more specifically, English. As we can see in the graph, learners wish to read newspapers and magazines in other languages. It is safe to say that they are interested in learning other languages and English more precisely.

As it is clear, that in Pakistan, all of the subjects are in the English language. So this is the main reason students of the schools in Pakistan seek ways to learn the English language to study all of their subjects without difficulty. For this reason, learners agreed with this statement because they want to learn English to avoid problems while studying their other essential informative subjects.

The participants utterly agreed that English is a significant part of the school programme. Because they know that once they learn English would be straightforward for them to read and understand their other subjects. Because without learning this language, they would not be able to understand other important and informative subjects, which is an excellent point that Pashtun learners know their actual problems and how to solve them.

Findings

This section of the study thoroughly discusses the study's findings and concludes the study under the light of the research question and objectives.

Age

The researchers have come to know during the analysis of the questionnaire that the EFL learners started learning the English language typically at the age of 5 to 7, and still after almost 15 years later, they are learning the same language, which shows that numerous factors are hindering the learning process. The researchers have just focused on the following factors in this connection.

Parental Role

The researchers have also found out that parental role is critical in learning a foreign language. Parents help as well as motivation increases this process of learning. The student in the Pashtun society also recognizes the importance of the parental role. Although the parents motivate the student and try to convince them that English

language learning is significant, they cannot help them learn English. The fundamental reason behind this lack of help from the parents' side might be the low literacy rate. The parents are not educated, and they do not know the English language, and thus they could not help their children.

After the analysis of the data, this is also found out that the students are highly motivated to learn the English language. They all know the importance of the English language for their education and professional life. For this reason, these students have been trying to learn this language throughout their educational carrier.

Conclusion

From this study, researchers discovered something exciting, and that is the parental role during language learning. Pashtun parents are to be proved very positive-minded as well as supportive. According to the learners, their parents take an interest in whatever they learn in English class. And parents take an interest in their children's activities in English class, for instance, different language skills. It is discovered that parents' attitudes are thoroughly positive towards learning the English language as well as they are strongly desired to help their children to learn this language. Parents are proved to be a source of motivation for their children. The parental role is one of the social factors. So it is observed that this social factor is involved in learning English in Pashtun's society and affects the learning process positively. So this social factor is proved positive. Here is the same case with teachers as we know that the support and courage of teachers cannot be replaced. The researchers came to know that teachers of the learning are very supportive. The support of the teacher makes the learner feel motivated. Pashtun teachers' attitudes are positive towards which makes learners' attitudes positive as well. Learners find their parents and their teachers very helpful during the language learning process.

Some learners want to learn the English language for practical purposes (e.g. job, etc.). Because in Pakistan, it is indispensable to know English more precisely in academic areas. To achieve educational goals, everyone wants to learn this language.

Pashtun learners take an interest in foreign languages. They are desired to communicate with different people worldwide, and more specifically, they want to communicate with English speakers. Learners feel strongly motivated to learn the English language. They want to learn all aspects of this language. This study is strong proof of the positive attitude of Pashtun s towards English language learning.

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