آیا فراگیری زبان دوم به معنی فراگیری فرهنگ دوم است؟

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چکیده

در میان دست اندرکاران زبان‌آموزی و زبان‌شناسی کاربردی بسیاری بر این عقیده‌اند کـه فراگیـری زبـان بـه منزله فراگیری فرهنگ دوم است. برای رسیدن به پاسخی قابل قبول در این زمینه، ابتدا لازم است چند موضوع مربـوط به این مقوله مورد بحث قرار گرفته و ابهامات موجود از میان برداشته شود. در این مقاله به مباحثی چون فرهنگ، زبـان مالکیت زبان، امپریالیسم زبانی، و جامعه زبانی پرداخته شده و با برجسته کردن ابهامات موجـود سـعی بـر آن اسـت تـا میزان درستی نظریه برابری فراگیری زبان دوم با فراگیری فرهنگ دوم مورد بررسی قرار گیرد. بر اساس اسـتدلال ارائـه شده، به نظر می‌رسد تجدید نظر در این زمینه ضرورت دارد.

Does Second Language Acquisition Mean Second Culture Acquisition?

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Abstract

It is quite common in ELT to encounter positions which equate SLA with SCA. However, it is believed that a prerequisite to resolving this basic diversity is the demystification of a set of dominant misconceptions concerning language, culture and speech community. Highlighting a number of dominant misunderstandings in this relation, the present article questions the validity of SLA/SCA parallelism.

Key words: 1.Bilingualism and biculturalism 2. Second language acquisition 3.Language-culture relationship

1.Introduction

A chronic, but not settled, question in second language acquisition (SLA) research has been whether SLA is parallel with or leads to second culture acquisition (SCA). In response to this question a vast body of literature of contradictory positions has been developed. Stressing language- culture relationship, a number of scholars including Hamers & Blanc 1989 and Schuman 1978 vote for SLA/SCA parallelism. This position, however, has not been free from criticism. In the present article several misconceptions that have led to this general position are discussed and some issues such as: the conceptual ambiguity of the terms culture, native speaker and target culture, overlooking dinamicity in culture, equating the culture of the content with that of the language, inattention to different degrees of acculturation pursued by language learners, parallelizing cultural familiarity and cultural membership, and overemphasizing learners' need for cultural learning, compared to native speakers', are highlighted.

1.1. The definition of culture

As far as the meaning of culture is concerned, lack of consensus among the practitioners has led to tricky issues and diverse perspectives. Stern (1992) notes that some language teachers use the term culture to refer to cultural products, (e.g., literary works or works of art) and others use it to refer to background information (e.g., facts about the history or geography of countries where the target language is spoken). Still it is posited that culture, in addition to embracing these elements includes such aspects as behavior, attitudes, and the social knowledge that people use to interpret experience, (Michael et al. 1996).

Following the latter position, it is argued that culture is not something to be acquired in the same way as language. That is, SCA cannot be achieved as adequately

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and easily as SLA can. While familiarity with history, geography or any factual information is likely to be complete, the behavioral dimension of culture is less possible to be totally acquired.

1.1.1. Misinterpretation of the target culture: A second issue related to what was mentioned above is the misinterpretation of the concept of the 'target culture'. (For insightful information refer to Murphy, 1988). The major problem with this concept is the presupposition, which implies a single homogeneous target culture common to all native speakers of a language. Quite relevant in another way is the invalid assumption of the existence of a homogeneous native speaker community. However, it is argued that the notion of 'native speaker' is a fuzzy one; though it assumes a general similarity, its members are actually non-homogeneous. Differences in viewpoints, attitudes and opinions and even conflicting views on the same subject among native speakers are quite natural. Rampton (1990:97) stresses this position when he asserts "The concepts of native speaker and mother tongue are often criticized, but continue in circulation in the absence of alternatives." It is believed that the concept of 'native speaker' can be put under question from linguistic and pragmatic perspectives. In fact, the concepts of 'native speaker' and 'target culture' are so imprecise and ambiguous that it is almost impossible to locate agreement on their meanings or their target/ reference groups. Thus, since all the speakers of a given language may not possess the same culture, no particular individual can be taken as the representative of a given culture.

1.1.2. Dinamicity of culture: Another misconception deals with the ignorance of the dinamicity and changes in culture. Earlier models (e.g., Brooks, 1975; Nostrand, 1974) tended to view culture as a relatively invariant and static entity made up of accumulated, classifiable, observable, and thus eminently teachable and learnable 'facts.' This perspective focused on the surface level behavior, but did not look at the underlying value orientations. Nor did it recognize the variability of behavior within the target cultural community, the participating role of the individual in the creation of culture, or the interaction of language and culture in making of the meaning (Moore, 1991). By contrast, the more recent models, among them Michael et al. (1996), see culture as dynamic and variable. It is constantly changing, its members display a great range of behavior and different levels of attention to the guiding value orientations, and meaning is continuously constructed through human interaction and communication. This major transformation in perspective has been characterized by conceptual shifts from culture-specific to culture-general models of intercultural competence, cultural stereotypes to cultural generalizations, cultural absolutes to cultural variations (within and across cultures), and culture as distinct from language to culture as integral to language. Language in this process plays a fascinating and complex double role: it is a medium for as well as a shaper of culture (Michael et al. 1996). Approving this position, the present article does not consider culture as a static phenomenon. Rather, it is taken as a developmental and living phenomenon, which evolves as people conduct their daily lives. In this position, generation gap, age, gender, residence and occupation are but a few sources of diversity and dissimilarity.

1.1.3.Culture as content and culture as medium: A fourth prevalent misconception has to do with the parallelism drawn between culture of content and culture of medium or language. Language indisputably carries or transforms the interactants' culture. However, this quality should not by any means be interpreted as an edge to consider the language users as bound slaves of the medium or language they use for exchanging information. Distinction should be made between the cultural content and the cultural medium, what Cortazzi and Jin (1999) call "culture of learning". It is a truism that a conversation or a text is likely to convey cultural meaning. However, this

culture conveying property is seen as an attribute of the speakers or writers not the language.

1.1.4. The problem of acculturation: The supposition of an equal degree of acculturation and integration for all language speakers has also led to another misinterpretation. Acculturation in L2 ranges from the classroom instruction to the total immersion in the host culture, from the formal setting of the classroom to the naturalistic setting in the target community. Since the ability to behave like someone else is no guarantee that one will be more easily accepted by the groups who speak the language, nor that mutual understanding will emerge for such an imitation; a point demanding decision is whether we should make students try as hard as they can to acquire all sorts of linguistic and behavioral patterns from the encountered culture even to the point of caricature because it is the best way to feel and understand the culture. It seems, therefore, that neither drawing an invariant program for culture acquisition nor considering a similar destination for all language learners is considered realistic or reasonable.

1.1.5. Cultural recognition/ cultural production: Cultural recognition/cultural production parallelism is another prevalent misconception in this relation. A highly praised topic in teaching a new language and its culture is the idea of cultural competence, the nature of which has long been a debated topic. In this relation Kramsch's (1993: 81, also Kramsch 2002 personal communication) basic question deserves notice: "Does cultural competence include the obligation to behave in accordance with the social conventions of a given speech community?" Nostrand (1989) and Valdman (1992) see two separate types of knowledge about the culture and experience of the cultural competence and cultural performance. Skirso (1991) also queries the extent to which cultural content is integrated in the texts, dialogues, and exercises. Having distinguished cultural recognition from cultural production, he asserts that students may need to recognize the meaning of target group behavior but not wish to follow it. In other words, it is claimed that students' familiarity with English or a foreign culture, gained in an English class, does not necessarily lead to their biculturalism. That is, having a culture differs from knowing about a culture.

1.1.6. Language as the exclusive means of transferring culture: Yet another misunderstanding stems from the supposition which implies language as the exclusive means of transferring culture, i.e. culture is thought to be merely learned or expressed through language. If culture is what people do in addition to what they say, then television shows and movies, accessible everywhere, undoubtedly provide people with a much more massive repertoire. Simply stated, through films and television shows, whether or not dubbed into our native language, we chiefly learn about Japanese, English or any other culture not only from what they say but also from what they do. This instance by and in itself can be taken as a vigorous support for the possibility of separating language from culture.

1.1.7. The learner's need as the only cause for second language learning: The position that only magnifies the learners' need for acquiring a new culture also sounds mistaken. A basic controversy with respect to culture in EFL/ ESL studies seems to be the wrong consideration that merely presupposes the learners' need for maintaining a conversation with English native speakers not the other way round. This premise, in turn, has led to the justification of language learners' need to become bilingual and bicultural. In other words, the native speakers' *equal need* for interacting with non-native speakers of a language, English or otherwise, has been taken for granted. If cultural understanding for English language learners is a necessity, English native speakers are logically expected to feel an equal need to learn and understand the

numerous cultures possessed by the learners all over the world. In other words, the assumption of a superior-inferior relationship between the two sides of communication does not sound reasonable. Such economic reasons as the English speaking countries' struggle for keeping their market share in other countries seem to explicitly justify their need to get acquainted with and understand the local cultures of other countries. More importantly, in a variety of cases neither of the participants conversing in English has an English culture in background. This point has been aptly discussed in Talebinezhad and Aliakbari (2001) as they claim that in English as an international language (EIL) the interactors are unpredictable.

1.1.8. English learning leading to Westernization: Another misconception is the position which holds that learning English leads to Westernization. The struggles of English speaking countries in colonizing the third world countries in the past two centuries and their dominant policy in imposing English on the natives of the colonized territories, on the one hand and their undervaluing local native languages on the other, have created a pessimistic attitude towards English, especially among the third world nations. Accordingly, English is sometimes considered as the symbol of colonization. Although Shaw (1981) agrees that English has been a vestige of British colonialism or the sign of the American cultural imperialism, he also admits that it is now seen less as a symbol of imperialism and more as a viable candidate for the world's most important international language: "At this point in the world's history, English is the pre-eminent language of wider communication. It is used as a library language, as a medium of science, technology and international trade, and as a contact language between nations and parts of nations" (21). In an attempt to elaborate on the basic assumptions of English as an international language (EIL) (Smith 1983, Kachru 1982, Alptekin & Alptekin 1984 and Jenkins 1998), Talebinezhad and Aliakbari (2001) argue that in international settings English does not belong to any one group of people.

1.1.9.Linguisitic Imperialism: Linguistic Imperialism is also another misconception. The basic argument here is that English has developed into an international language and thus it will lead to cultural homogeneity among the English learners. Phillipson, (1992: 192), for instance, believes that "the relationship between the foreign or second language and the learning community represents a sort of core-periphery connection. Finally the core dominates over the periphery" (192). It is argued that in an EIL (English as an international language) situation there is no need for the user to be like a native speaker of English. In such conditions English can be taken as a means of expressing the speakers' culture, not a tool for the imitating the culture of the Great Britain, the U.S.A. or any other English speaking country. In sum, since in EIL the interlocutors come from different cultures no special culture can be imposed in its respective teaching programs.

2. Discussion and conclusion

Language by and in itself is acultural. It has no function until it is actualized as writing or speech. The moment an individual, inadvertently a cultural being, uses it for interactional or transactional purposes, he expresses his cultural alignment. By then, language becomes a cultural corpus. To put it in other words, detached from language user, language is not culture loaded. What makes it a cultural phenomenon is the language user, not language itself. In other words the actual linguistic behavior is flavored with the culture of the speaker or writer and man's linguistic behavior is likely to transfer a cultural meaning or to influence language use. This signifies the " language as a carrier" metaphor. It carries the culture that is loaded on it. Accepting this position, the researchers expresse doubt on the general approval of what has so far been

mentioned concerning the non-separable relationship between language and culture or the SLA/ SCA parallelism. The arguments are considered valid only for a native language and a native culture. When a new language or a new culture is acquired the proposed explanations fail to account for the relationship. As a result the researchers argue that the underlying assumptions for this relationship needs revision. For instance, theorization in this domain suffers from an inattention to a basic distinction, that culture in L2 is inheritantly different from culture in L1. The major thesis in this relation is that language-culture relationship does not follow a similar trend in L1 and L2 conditions. In the former, there is no possibility for choice. The language user inadvertently resorts to his single available language for his cultural intentions. When a second language is acquired, the number of variables extends to four. Consequently six possible cases are likely to happen. The following tables represent the distinction.

Table 1: Language culture relationship in L1 condition

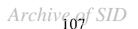| Available Language	Available Culture
Native language	Native culture

Table 2: Language culture relationship in L2 condition

Available Languages	Available Cultures
Native language	Native culture
Second language	Second culture

The possible combinations of the elements are as follows:

1.L1—C1, using one's L1 in expressing his native culture, e.g. natural communicative behavior in mother tongue

2.L1—C2, adopting a native language to express a nonnative or an acquired culture e.g. dubbed films and serials shown on television.

3.L2—C1, using L2 to express one's native culture, e.g., L2 speaker talking about his fellow country customs and traditions.

4.L2—C2, using a second language to express a second or an acquired culture, e.g. bilinguals living and interacting in L2 context.

5.L1—C1&C2, using L1 in expressing a mixed culture, a mixture of native and acquired cultures.

6.L2—C1&C2, using L2 in expressing a mixed culture, a mixture of native and acquired cultures.

Following this distinction, educators, language teachers and language learners are expected to tend to develop a new perspective or approach concerning culture in ELT classes. Accordingly, the incorporation of the ideas held by sociolinguists, discourse analysts, sociologists, anthropologists and psychologists in SLA irrespective of this distinction is considered a drawback in our current practice in ELT contexts. Since these ideas generally presuppose a native language and a native culture, they naturally base their theorization on such assumption. Such proposals are considered valid only for L1 circumstances. Therefore, it is vitally important for SLA researchers to find domestic solutions to their problems. In particular, they are expected to take precaution of overlooking the distinction specified in this article. This is why one cannot help hesitating in adopting theories, arguments and suggestions pertaining to L1 in SLA studies. In short, the proposed conditions for language- culture relationship clearly represent that becoming bilingual and bicultural is one out of the six possible conditions that language learners may experience. Therefore, without intending to completely reject the possibility of SLA/ SCA parallelism, the present article casts doubt on its generalization as the sole or even dominant process in English language learning.

Alternatively, recognition of second culture and the expression of the learners' native culture through their acquired L2 are seen as possibilities, which deserve particular attention.

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