Considerations of Identity in L2 Learning

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- Identity is constituted through and by language. (p.895)
- Within sociocultural approaches, identity is theorized as a contingent process involving dialectic relations between learners and the various worlds and experiences they inhabit and which act on them. (p.895)
- In SLA and Applied linguistics research, attribution of group-based, ethnic characteristics has tended to perpetuate difference in negative terms vis-à-vis Western, and especially Anglo-American, norms and expectations. Therefore, characterizations of students are likely to be more harmful than helpful to language educators. (p.896)

Identity and SLA Research

1. Theories of social identity (p.896)
   a. Tajfel (1981) developed this theory in which social identity is derived from an individual’s membership in a social group (or groups)
   b. Giles and Johnson (1981, 1987) drawing on the above work developed the ethnolinguistic identity theory in which language was posited as a prominent marker of group membership and social identity.

2. Interactional sociolinguists (p.896)
   a. Gumperz (1982) and Heller (1982, 1987, 1995): the choice of language (code) and the use of the code in particular ways signal “social relationships based on shared or unshared group memberships”.

3. Social distance in John Schimann’s Acculturation Model (1976, 1978): the greater the social distance between two cultures, the more difficulty the learner would have in acquiring the TL, whereas the smaller the social distance, the more likely the learner would be successful in acquiring the TL. The degree to which the learner identifies with another culture, the more motivated he or she will be to acquire that culture’s language. (p.897)

4. The role played by attitude and motivation in language learning proposed by Gardner and Lambert (1972):
   a. Instrumental motivation reflects targeted, pragmatic purposes for learning a language
   b. Integrative motivation reflects the learners desire to integrate themselves within the L2 cultural group and become part of that society.
      - Integrative motivation is a language learners desire to learn the TL to be able to communicate with, or find out about, members of the TL culture, and does not imply direct contact with the TL group.
      - Assimilative motivation is the desire to become an indistinguishable member of the target speech community, and usually requires prolonged contact with that community. (p.897)
Recent Approaches to Identity in SLA Research

Language, Identity, and Investment

Norton (200):

- Learner’s identity influences motivation and acquisition of a L2.
- Identity: a reference to “how a person understands his or her relationship to the world, how that relationship is constructed across time and space, and how the person understands possibilities for the future”.
- Language learning occurs in both the macro level of powerful institutions and the micro level of everyday encounters (Foucault, 1980).
- Bourdieu: the relation between identity and symbolic power, “the right to speak”. Cultural capital: refers to the knowledge and modes of thought that characterize different classes and groups in relation to specific sets of social form” (p.899).
- Investment: the complex motives and desires that language learners may have vis-à-vis a TL. An investment in the TL is also an investment in a learner’s own identity, an identity which is constantly changing across time and space (p.899)
  - “Speech, speakers, and social relationships are inseparable” (p.899)
  - “An individual’s identity in L2 contexts is mediated by the reactions of others to that individual’s social and cultural position, which, in turn, can influence that individual’s motivation to learn in ways that are not predictable using standard psychological or sociological categories and variables mentioned earlier” (p.899)

Language Identity and Gender (p.900)

1. Deficit framework: women were characterized as deficient in their language use compared to men due to females’ relative insecurity and inferior social position in relation to men.
2. Dominance model: male-female conversational patterns mirrored broader social power imbalances.
3. Gender differences model: men and women were socialized in different cultures in which they learned different rules for appropriate verbal interaction.

Applied linguists ➔ female learners have superior learning strategies
SLA ➔ female NSs were likely to ask more helpful questions and to negotiate meaning in a more consistent way than male NSs.

(HOWEVER) Gender as a social variable and is mediated by other social variables such as race, social class, educational background and experience, cultural norms and so on.

- Multilingualism, Second Language Learning, and Gender (Pavlenko and Piller, 2001)
  1. Gendered access to linguistic resources in multilingual contexts, the ways in which gender privileges access to L2 skills in different societies.
  2. Gendered agency in L2 learning and use.
  3. Critical and feminist pedagogy, gender representation in teaching material.

Language, Identity, Race, and Ethnicity

- Norton (2002) “ethnicity, gender, and class are not experienced as a series of discrete background variables, but are all, in complex and interconnected ways, implicated in the construction of identity and the possibility of speech” (p. 902)
- Legitimate Language: explore the role played by schools in the production and reproduction of social identities and unequal relation of power, since the “language practices of educational institutions are bound up in the legitimization of relations of power among ethnolinguistic groups”. These processes must be contextualized within broader historical processes of colonialism, postcolonialism, globalization, and nationalist and minority rights movement. (p.902)

**Native Speaker, Non-native Speaker, and Identity**
The vast majority of ELLs in the world today are instructed by NNSs. English is now more commonly spoken as a second, rather than first, language by bilinguals and is used more frequently for intercultural communication between NNSs than between NSs. (p.903)
- concept of ‘Othering’: positioning ELLs vis-à-vis NSs (p.903)
- Exploring identity for L2 users through personal narratives of life history (p.904)
- Reconstruction of identity: first phase is of continuous loss followed by an overlapping second phase of gain and reconstruction
- Move from TESOL (teaching English to speakers of other languages) to TEGCOM (teaching English for globalized communication).