

To conclude, as mentioned previously, language at early age can be beneficial both in social life and in brain development. Therefore, today, learning any second language can be a tool for building the future of people.

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PSYCHOLOGICAL AND CULTURAL IMPLICATIONS OF LEARNING LANGUAGES AT EARLY AGE

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Annotation. This article gives information about the psychological and the cultural role of learning foreign languages and their influence on people who learn languages at early age. Furthermore, this article can work as a practical guide for the teachers that teach foreign language because it gives valuable information and related examples on current topic. The main purpose of this article is to provide psychological and cultural explanations in learning languages and its role in social life.

Key words: cultural identity, psycho-social development, interlocutors, intercultural competencies.

Nowadays, education in a foreign language should be started at early age in order to achieve good results. Therefore, the role of foreign language cannot be compared to the fields of life. So, Liddicoat goes on to enumerate the important educational outcomes of learning languages, all of which are central to the needs of students who will be required to participate in an increasingly interconnected world: knowledge of the language and the ability to use it in communication with other people understanding of the culture of another group understanding one's own language and culture through comparison with another language and culture knowing how to communicate in contexts where shared language resources between participants are limited knowing how to communicate across cultural boundaries (Fernandez, 2008, p.). Language is at the heart of virtually all human relations. People use language to identify themselves with others in the ways they group themselves. By their manners, they form the system and the structure of the society. Hence, language is the construction of the identity. We can say that the developing stages of the child show us clearly that by learning a language the child starts to be aware of the social environment and cultural values, hence he/she is going to earn a particular identity of her/his society. Quintana and Wright states that: "In terms of cultural identity development, it is generally at this stage that children begin to move from a conceptual understanding of race and gender from a physical standpoint to a social perspective, with the beginning notions of the sociopolitical context from which culture is derived" (Cited in Tomas, Schwarzbaum, 2006, p.2). Erickson's stages of psycho-social development help us to understand development and its relation to language and culture. Erickson was interested in how children were socialized and how this affected their identities. According to the theory, the successful completion of each stage will be the reason for the development of a healthy personality and identity. The theory of stages of psycho-social development has eight stages, which are the following:

1) **Trust versus Mistrust:** From ages birth to one year this stage is paramount in the development of a healthy identity of the child. When a child receives good care and is taught to earn the trust of his environment during his growing stages in front of fear he

will not lose his control over self. The child must gain confidence and security in the world around him. If the stage is incomplete, it will result in an inability to trust and may result in anxiety and mistrust of him and others.

2) **Autonomy vs. Shame and Doubt:** This stage is between one and three. Children are trying to realize their independence where they can choose which toy to play with or choose what to wear or what to eat. If parents support and encourage the child in his independence, he can gain trust in himself and will learn to be independent. In this stage, if the child is overly controlled, pressed, and mostly time criticized,

the children will feel inadequate in their ability to survive and they can become overly dependent upon others.

3) **Initiative vs. Guilt:** This stage starts at three and continues until six. They try to plan activities, make up games, and initiate with others. If the child is allowed to be initiative with others and to be creative in playing, where it is known that children learn by fun, hence he/she will develop a sense of initiative and will develop their ability to interact with others to make friends and will be ready to take decisions themselves.

4) **Industry vs. Inferiority:** From age six until puberty, Ericson calls this a “school age”. Here child starts to master the more formal rules of life he can take be initiative in projects at school and feel good and proud about what they have achieved. During this stage, firstly parents and teachers play an important role in their success. If children are encouraged and reinforced, they will be productive and will have the ability to achieve their goals.

5) **Identity vs. Role Confusion:** The transition from childhood to adulthood is the most important stage. Children are becoming more independent and starting to look for their future careers, relationships, housing, etc. They start to form their identities according to their origin. Nevertheless, here they are still not sure about their job career and are still decide stage.

6) **Intimacy vs. Isolation:** Occurring in a young adulthood, we begin to share more intimately with others. We explore relationships, which can lead to the marriage, or we can settle down our relationship with our environment and have a long term and

successful and trustable friendships. However, at the same time at this stage, we are afraid of rejection; being turned down, our partners breaking up with us. We are familiar with pain and to some of us rejection is painful, our egos cannot bear the pain. Avoiding relationships can lead to isolation, loneliness, and even depression

7) Generativity vs. Stagnation: In adulthood, we concern of establishing and guiding next generation. Here we try to settle down our relations, we establish our careers, begin our own families, raising our children happily, trying to be productive at work, other way by failing the activities we became stagnant and feel ourselves unproductive.

8) Ego Integrity vs. Despair: As we grow older, we start to be less productive and explore life as a retired person. Usually people after completing all these stages are happy about their success as their children, their work and the rest of the things. That time if we feel that we did not accomplish our goals, that time we can become dissatisfied with the life and develop despair which leads to a kind of depression and hopelessness. These stages show us how our personality grow and develop or by other words, how our identities are structured by our cultural insides. Holland, Skinner, Lanchicotte and Cain stated that: “Identities are a key means through which people care about and care for what is going on around them. They are important bases from which people create new activities, new worlds, and new ways of being”. (Cited in Kim 2003:138) In fact, the relationship between language and identity is very important; theories of the language reflect our identities. The educators need to take this relationship very seriously. We can say that speech, speakers, and social relationships are inseparable. Here related to the issue of child development and identity I would like to cite Bonny Norton (1997, p. 410) who stated the following: “In this view, every time language learners speak, they are not only exchanging information with their interlocutors; they are also constantly organizing and recognizing a sense of who they are and how they relate to the social world. They are, in other words, engaged in identity construction and negotiation”.

Cultural identity related to this issue, I would like to give an example that is related to how cultural identity reflects the language learning. Schechter and Bayley (1997, pp. 518, 521) mention about Mexican family, who lives in California and tries to adapt to the

new society. The authors examined the patterns of communication at home and on the relationships among language choice and dimensions of language use. Relating to this the family faced a problem in dealing with the school of their child. As mentioned above that the family was trying to adapt to the new society that requires investigating and studying a new language, culture and society. Actually nowadays especially with bilingual children, the parents should teach them their mother tongue and culture as well. As we live in a global world so not so important where we live it can be not our origin country but the family plays a very big role in a constructing the right identities of their children, by speaking their tongue at home and by practicing their own culture. Where in one of the articles Morales states that Spanish who lives in America speaks sometimes as she called it “Spanglish” those who speak “Spanglish” may see it as representative of their identities as Spanish speaking Americans. “Spanglish is what we speak, but it is also who we Latinos are, and how we act, and how we perceive the world” (Cited in Gibson, 2004, p.5) By other words, they perform code switching or code mixing to show their personalities. Morales issues that: “Language both code and content is a complicated dance between internal and external interpretations of our identity”. Productive Teacher firstly, actually every teacher must remember that every parent has high hopes, valid concerns, and big expectations for that child. The teacher must be the helper of the parents who put their children in the teacher’s hands. The teacher must help develop the parents’ confidence. In short, a good teacher can be helpful for the students to realize that many difficult things can be resolved very easily. All lessons should be built on the student's needs. Where Penny, (1996, p. 284) states in her book “Think back to your classroom learning, as either child or adult, not necessarily of a foreign language, and try to recall a teacher of yours who was outstandingly good, from whom you learned well”. A good teacher must try to create an atmosphere in which every student can learn and be productive, in which every student feels safe enough to share their thoughts and feelings, an atmosphere in which making a mistake is seen as an opportunity to learn rather than an opportunity to feel like a failure. The teacher must be the helper of the parents. The home and school should ideally work effectively together and support one another. If the

relationship between the teacher and the student is friendly, it is already a kind of success. Where some research shows that when the teacher just concentrates on the materials it could not be enough for successful learning. Hence, the instructor must appreciate some values like the cultural or social background of the children... Therefore, we can conclude that teacher plays an important role in language learning. The teacher must be very selective in organizing a lesson considering factors like race, ethnicity, age, and social background otherwise the students will not be comfortable and the lesson is not going to be successful and productive. Without language knowledge, it is difficult to learn about different cultures. In addition, one of the important points is that the teacher should be aware of the student's culture as well as other ways it will lead to a big misunderstanding. Where Thanasoulas mentions in his article that a new teacher from the U.S. was teaching English in a Palestinian school in Israel, and the teacher was trying to explain the grammar of the present perfect tense. After its explanation, the teacher asked some questions to the students which was a cause of misunderstanding. The question was in this way: Have you ever lived in Israel? The responses of the students were completely different and most of them were silent and a little bit confused. Some of the students said no. The teacher first could not realize and understand what the problem was. After some moments, the teacher asked the same question, only to receive a response. At that moment one of the students said: "Palestine teacher, Palestine". At that moment the teacher was so amazed because the students' responses were according to cultural values and all of them knew the grammar well. Hence, this kind of example shows us clearly that the teacher should always be aware of the both of the cultures. Cultural awareness should be considered as one of the important factors in education. According to Dana, Sheley and Sharon (1997, p. 630).

"Educators should develop and implement curricula that respect human differences in race, ethnicity, language, religion, age, and gender... Curricula should also incorporate multicultural literature and materials that reflect a vast array of heritages". Teachers should instill in their students a sense of self and pride in their cultural heritages, and teach them to respect one another. The educators play a very important role after the

parents. They create models, which are especially followed by the young generation in the future. Educators should also encourage students to have positive human interactions with each other, despite their historical and social backgrounds. Studying culture always leads us to study our culture as well. Byram, Esarte-Sarries, and Taylor (1991, p. 8) state: “Second, language teaching is merely one of the learning experiences through which pupils might be affected in respect of their perceptions and attitudes”. Surely foreign language education is intercultural. Bringing a foreign language to the classroom means connecting learners to a very different world from their world. The teachers should possess several intercultural competencies and strategies. They should be helpful to their students to be familiar with the levels of communication in which misunderstanding can arise, where they will be able to negotiate the meaning and resolve misunderstanding. Fantini (1991, p. 118) states: “Entry into another world view, hopefully, will help individuals develop an appreciation for the diversity and richness of human beings” Therefore means that at any rate language learning means culture learning. There is no such thing as human nature independent from culture. Every word or mimic is filled by our cultural values and traditions. According to small details, we can guess the origin and culture of someone.

To conclude, there are many advantages to the studying a foreign language. Knowing another language enriches our personal lives and gives us many new opportunities because we can communicate and connect with people of other cultures and nationalities. There is no doubt that we are living in times of great change. Nowadays the education of foreign languages become one of the important factors. Businesses and professions seek employees fluent in more than one language. Employers want their employees to be intercultural competent. Hence we can say that language is a tool that is used in transforming a culture. Language can be used in learning our own or in discovering new cultures as well. Language helps us to be engaged with new ways of life and patterns of new cultures, where we can communicate with someone from very far and different points in the world, which will make our life colorful and rich. Exposure to another culture through its culture will introduce us the new realms of ideas, customs,

and habits. It can help us to follow international events with insight, opening our perspectives to make us an informed and responsible citizen of our country and of the world. Realizing new cultures will create good opportunities for exchange, cooperation, and mutual benefit. Though we cannot imagine how much ethnic and cultural values differ through language, where language preserves the history and traditions of the people. Hence, such insider knowledge can achieve cultural understanding.

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