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“Investigating Social Factors Affecting Language Acquisition at Graduation Level”

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Abstract

The topic of language acquisition is intimately tied to the way individuals internalize and comprehend the speech of others. Humans can articulate language only after they have internalized the underlying rules they have been exposed to since childhood. Language acquisition is the process that occurs in a child's brain when they are learning their first language or mother tongue. This research aims to investigate the effect of socioeconomic status on language acquisition and analyze the role of peer and teacher interactions in adolescent language acquisition. A causal-comparative research design was used to investigate these factors in the acquisition of the language at the graduation level. All the graduate university students of district Lahore were taken as the population of the current research. A sample of 230 students was selected using a convenient sampling technique. A standardized questionnaire was used for this research. Data was obtained through the Google Docs questionnaire among the respondents. Correlation and regression statistical analysis techniques were used to analyze the data. The research findings indicate that a mother's occupation significantly affects language acquisition. There was a weak positive relationship between the teacher and peer interactions and language acquisition. The number of friends significantly affects language acquisition. This study suggested that educational institutions might work to promote educational programs to educate parents, particularly mothers, on effective strategies for fostering language development through daily interactions with their children.

Keywords: Social Factors, Language, Language Acquisition, University Students

Introduction

Language is a uniquely human trait that sets us apart from other creatures. It is a complex system of symbols and signs that allows us to express and share our emotions, desires, and feelings. As humanity has been divided into various nations, creeds, colors, groups, and races, language has also diversified. Each nation possesses its own distinct culture and language, highlighting the deep connection between the two. Consequently,

language serves as a key indicator of a group or individual's identity. With the rise in global population, technological advancements, rapid urbanization, and accelerated industrialization, the world is moving ever closer to a state of globalization (Younus et al., 2023).

The rapid pace of technological advancement, globalization, and international marketing has had a significant impact on human culture, language, and lifestyle. The languages and cultures of developed nations have greatly influenced and often overshadowed those of other cultures. Research aims to expand knowledge and uncover new perspectives (Rao et al., 2023). Language, believed to be a divine gift to humanity, highlights the unique superiority of mankind.

Throughout our lives, we acquire new knowledge and create new conceptual understandings, primarily within social environments. Adult learning typically happens in these social contexts, involving engagement with peers, colleagues, and mentors. Researchers in anthropology and sociology, as well as in developmental psychology have consistently emphasized the crucial role of social interactions in learning and development (Rohlfing et al., 2016).

The process of language acquisition is quite remarkable, especially in how a child learns their first language without any formal instruction. Much like an infant, a child begins to respond to the speech they frequently hear from their surroundings, particularly the speech of their mother or a close caregiver who is regularly with them. The topic of language acquisition is intimately tied to the way individuals internalize and comprehend the speech of others. Humans can articulate language only after they have internalized the underlying rules they have been exposed to since childhood (Yuliana & Fergina, 2021).

According to Chaer (2003), language acquisition is the process that occurs in a child's brain when they are learning their first language or mother tongue. This process is typically distinguished from language learning, which pertains to the processes involved when a child learns a second language after acquiring their first language. Therefore, language acquisition is associated with the primary language, while learning a language refers to acquiring a secondary language.

Language learning, as one of the intricate problems of human experience, involves more than just mechanical processes; it also engages mental activity. In other words, language learning is intertwined with mental or cognitive processes (brain activity). Consequently, studying language learning requires an interdisciplinary approach that bridges linguistics and psychology, known as psycholinguistics. This field is crucial for understanding how individuals can process and comprehend the speech of others (Yuliana & Fergina, 2021).

The primary goal of language acquisition is for individuals to be able to use language effectively and appropriately, whether in spoken or written form. For effective communication, adherence to correct and suitable language rules is essential (Field, 2003). Understanding that language is prevalent and studied in linguistics necessitates not only the principles of language but also the readiness of cognitive and affective aspects (such as confidence and fearlessness). Additionally, it involves psychomotor skills for proper pronunciation and the ability to choose words accurately and appropriately. This study aimed

to investigate the social factors in the acquisition of language at the graduation level and the role of peer and teacher interactions in language acquisition.

Objectives of the study

The objectives of this research were:

- To investigate the effect of socioeconomic status on language acquisition.
- To analyze the role of peer and teacher interactions in adolescent language acquisition.

Research Questions

- What is the effect of socioeconomic status on language acquisition?
- What is the role of peer and teacher interactions in adolescent language acquisition?

Significance of the study

The research highlighted the social factors in the acquisition of language. It is important to understand how broader societal contexts shape language learning outcomes. By examining these factors, researchers can inform educational policies and practices, address disparities in language proficiency among students from different socio-economic backgrounds, and promote inclusive education. Insights from this research can enhance teaching methods, curriculum development, and cross-cultural communication, ultimately equipping individuals with the linguistic skills and cultural awareness needed for success in a globalized society.

Literature Review

Social factors play a crucial role in language acquisition, influencing both the process and outcomes for learners. Research indicates that adult learners' second language acquisition is significantly affected by classroom dynamics, including teachers' strategies and students' personalities, such as motivation and anxiety levels. The social factors influencing second language acquisition in adult learners include teachers' strategies, students' personalities (motivation, introversion/extroversion, self-esteem, inhibition, risk-taking, anxiety), and group learning dynamics (Samosir et al., 2023).

Researches indicates that social factors and social context plays a significant role in acquiring vernacular English, as highlighted in the variationist study, with implications for language pedagogy (Davydova, 2022).

Stanic (2020), while working with primary and secondary school students, determined that social factors significantly influence foreign language selection and acquisition in and impacts language policy and teaching methods.

Social factors play a crucial role in language acquisition, influencing development, learning, and identity negotiation through cultural interactions, shared knowledge, and communication within communities (Satpathy, 2019).

Similarly, socio-cultural and socio-economic factors, such as low income and education levels, impact written language acquisition in children. Support from social networks and investments in education can help mitigate these challenges (Leite et al., 2015).

Language learning, or language acquisition, refers to acquiring one's first language. Experts often use the terms language learning and language acquisition interchangeably. According to Kridalaksana (1982), the term "learning" is employed because acquiring a

second language can occur through formal educational methods, especially in bilingual or multilingual settings. Additionally, second language acquisition can take place informally.

In this context, Dardjowidjojo (2003) argues that learning involves mastering the nuances of linguistic rules and language usage, whereas language learning involves acquiring formal knowledge of a language. When a strong sense of cohesion is cultivated, mastering all language rules becomes more accessible and applicable across diverse contexts. According to Cook (2009) language learning involves intentional study and understanding, whereas language acquisition happens subconsciously, much like how native speakers pick up their first language. Learning is associated with rules and explicit knowledge, while acquisition occurs naturally and intuitively, similar to how children absorb their mother tongue. Language acquisition is the innate, unconscious process through which individuals internalize a language, whereas language learning entails formal instruction (Pierce, 2013). Language learning involves direct teaching and the conscious gathering of knowledge, whereas language acquisition is through experiential learning in practical settings (Chater et al., 2018).

Language acquisition for English Language Learners is influenced by other social factors like educational inequities, cultural differences, and the distinction between conversational and academic language, impacting adolescents' success in communication and academics (Rodas & Osborn, 2016).

Social interactions play a crucial role in brain development and language acquisition, influencing how infants' brains are wired and developing in various ways, making it an optimal time for L2 exposure (Guvendir & Hardacre, 2022).

On the contrary, a research by Farianti, (2018) found no significant correlation between social factors (parents' economic, education, occupation levels, and environment) and students' English learning achievement, suggesting other factors may play a more influential role.

Based on the above literature the methodology adopted to answer the questions is provided below.

Methodology

The research paradigm underlying this study is a positivist approach. A Causal Comparative research design was used to investigate the social factors in the acquisition of the language at the graduation level. All the graduate students of district Lahore were taken as the population of the current research. A total of 230 graduate students were taken as a sample for this study. A convenient sampling method was employed to choose the sample. Data from participants were gathered using questionnaires. The first part of the questionnaire focused on obtaining demographic details from the participants. The second part comprised of the social factors in the acquisition of language which was assessed using a standardized tool named English language competence by Edgar (2023). The tool was adopted and permission was taken through E-mail.

Data Analysis

Statistical analysis techniques were used to analyze the data by using SPSS version 25. Regression statistical analysis technique was utilized to analyze the effect of socio-economic factors on the acquisition of language at the graduation level. The correlation statistical

analysis technique was utilized to analyze the role of peer and teacher interactions in adolescent language acquisition.

Table 1

Effect of Socioeconomic Status on Language Acquisition

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.173 ^a	.030	.004	13.520

a. Predictors: (Constant), Residence, Mother's Qualification, Mother's Occupation, Father's Qualification, Father's Occupation, Family Income

b. Dependent Variable: Language Acquisition

ANOVA^a

Factors of Socioeconomic Status on Language Acquisition

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
1	Regression	1259.872	6	209.979	1.149	.335 ^b
	Residual	40761.502	233	182.787		
	Total	42021.374	229			

a. Dependent Variable: Language Acquisition

b. Predictors: (Constant), Residence, Mother's Qualification, Mother's Occupation, Father's Qualification, Father's Occupation, Family Income

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		t	p
		B	Std. Error	Beta			
1	(Constant)	69.052	5.731			12.049	.000
	Family Income	.996	1.123	.062		.886	.376
	Father's Qualification	-.657	.580	-.082		-1.133	.259
	Father's Occupation	-.268	1.143	-.016		-.234	.815
	Mother's Qualification	.359	.679	.039		.528	.598
	Mother's Occupation	-2.696	1.193	-.162		-2.259	.025
	Residence	-.418	3.547	-.008		-.118	.906

a. Dependent Variable: Language Acquisition

Multiple linear regression model was used to explore the effect of socioeconomic status on language acquisition. In table 1, R Square value shows that only 3.0% variance in the dependent variable factors in language acquisition is explained by the independent variables' socioeconomic status. The p-value ($p = .335^b$) associated with ANOVA $F(6, 223) = 1.149$ reveals that the independent variables' socioeconomic status does not reliably predict their effect in language acquisition.

Factors in language acquisition = $69.052^* + .996$ (Family Income) + $-.657$ (Father Qualification) + $-.268$ (Father Occupation) + $.359$ (Mother Qualification) + -2.696^* (Mother

Occupation) +-.418 (Residence). Mother Occupation significantly affects the factors in language acquisition.

Table 2

Correlation Coefficient between Teacher and Peer Interactions and Factors in Language Acquisition

Variable	M	SD	N	r	p
Factors in language acquisition	65.05	13.546	230		
Teacher interactions	6.67	1.372	230	.36	.000
Peer interactions	3.53	1.195	230	.26	.000

Table 2 reflects there was a weak positive relationship ($r=.36$, $n=230$, $p=.000$) between the teacher and peer interactions, ($r=.26$, $n=230$, $p=.000$) and factors in the language acquisition.

Table 3

Effect of Social Factors in Language Acquisition

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.195 ^a	.038	-.001	13.556

c. Predictors: (Constant), Birth Order, Family System, Age, Gender, Total no. of Siblings, Number of friends

d. Dependent Variable: Factors in Language Acquisition

ANOVA^a

Factors of Social Factors in Language Acquisition

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
1	Regression	1595.532	9	177.281	.965	.470 ^b
	Residual	40425.842	220	182.754		
	Total	42021.374	229			

c. Dependent Variable: Factors in Language acquisition

d. Predictors: (Constant), Birth Order, Family System, Age, Gender, Total no. of Siblings, Number of friends

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	p
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	60.014	7.686		7.809	.000
	Birth Order	-.529	1.238	-.029	-.427	.670
	Family System	1.805	1.953	.063	.924	.356

Age	-1.688	1.359	-.086	-1.243	.215
Gender	1.781	3.259	.038	.547	.585
Total no. of Siblings	-.375	.691	-.039	-.543	.587
Number of friends	1.897	.953	.138	1.992	.048

a. Dependent Variable: Factors in Language acquisition

In table 3 a multiple linear regression model is used to explore the effect of social factors in language acquisition. R Square value shows that only 3.8% variance in the dependent variable, language acquisition is explained by the independent variables' social factors. The p-value ($p = .470^b$) associated with ANOVA $F(9, 220) = .965$ reveals that the independent variables' socioeconomic status reliably predict the dependent variable factors in language acquisition.

Factors in language acquisition = $69.014^* + -.529$ (Birth Order) + 1.805 (Family System) + -1.688 (Age) + 1.781 (Gender) + $-.375$ (Total no. of Siblings) + 1.897^* (Number of friends). The number of friends significantly affects language acquisition.

Discussion

According to the results of the study, socioeconomic factors were residence, mother's qualification, mother's occupation, father's qualification, father's occupation, and family income. The results showed that a mother's occupation significantly affects the socioeconomic factors in language acquisition. Previous studies concluded that society and culture significantly influence learners' beliefs and attitudes toward the target language. Consequently, a new trend has emerged, emphasizing the need for teaching materials to be socially and culturally relevant. This is especially true in monocultural and conservative societies, where people often feel uneasy about Western culture. In practice, this can create numerous challenges for learners (Abdullaev, 2021).

According to the results of the study, there is a correlation between teachers, peer interactions, and factors in language acquisition. The results showed that a weak positive relationship between the teacher and peer interactions and factors in language acquisition. Other studies found that the prior educational background of learners influences their progress, either positively or negatively. Their experiences with the target language, whether successful or not, are evident in their performance. Learners who have had significant exposure to the target language early in their education generally perform better than those who have had fewer opportunities for such exposure (Abdullaev, 2021).

Other studies found that teachers' attitudes toward the target language directly affect themselves and indirectly influence their students. Educators who have a positive outlook on a second or foreign language often pass this attitude on to their students by serving as exemplary role models. Conversely, teachers with a negative attitude towards the target language or those who employ poor teaching methods tend to have a detrimental effect (Abdullaev, 2021).

The result showed a statistically significant difference in the effect of social factors on language acquisition. The results showed that the number of friends significantly affects language acquisition.

Previous studies concluded that social interactions are a key catalyst for the human capacity to acquire and retain new information throughout life. We contend that the relationship between social interaction and learning is influenced by complex dynamics that encompass behavior, physiology, and brain function. Social agents inevitably influence and are influenced by each other, making it essential to consider interpersonal dynamics to fully understand the cognitive and neural mechanisms underlying social interactive learning (Felice et al., 2022).

Conclusion

The following conclusion was presented on the base of findings drawn from the current study. The result shows to some extent teachers use the English language for giving instructions and assignments and communicate in English in the classroom. The result also shows to some extent students feel confident asking questions in English during classroom discussions and chatting in English during lunch with their friends. A mother's occupation significantly affects language acquisition. There was a weak positive relationship between the teacher and peer interactions and language acquisition. Whereas the number of friends also significantly affected the process.

Recommendations

1. The results showed that a mother's occupation significantly affects language acquisition. This study recommended that educational institutions might work to promote educational programs to educate parents, particularly mothers, on effective strategies for fostering language development through daily interactions with their children.
2. There was a weak positive relationship between the teacher and peer interactions and language acquisition. The study recommended that educators should prioritize collaborative learning activities that promote interactions among students and between students and teachers, such as group projects and peer tutoring sessions focused on language skills.

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