

Chapter 4

The Emotional Aspect in Foreign Language Learning Process: The Role of Emotional Development in Child's Foreign Language Learning

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ABSTRACT

Language is one of the most essential features of humans. Another basic feature that is common for all mankind is emotions, and expression of emotions is through the use of language whether it is verbally uttered or represented by body language. This interrelated and human-specific nature of language and emotions gains a place in foreign or second language learning process studies as well. However, the emotional aspect in learning a second or foreign language has mostly been neglected, or in other words, it has commonly taken the backseat. From this point forth, this chapter descriptively represents how the emotional development of an individual—specifically the child's—fosters the foreign language learning process. In doing this, learning/acquisition theories and a child's emotional development process—as a foreign language learner—are reviewed and assumptions/suggestions are displayed through a detailed literature review.

INTRODUCTION

A child's development occurs in four basic dimensions which are; cognitive, physical, social and emotional. These dimensions are strictly interrelated and an alteration in one of these influences the others. However, in second language acquisition studies

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this indivisible structure of developmental dimensions has mostly been neglected or they typically focused on the cognitive dimension assuming learning is in most part related with the cognition (Garret & Young, 2009; Scovel, 1999). It is pleasing that there is a growing interest in taking the other developmental dimensions into consideration in second language acquisition contexts with the help of the studies on motivation and affect (e.g., Arnold, 1999; Dörnyei, 2003, 2005; Gardner & MacIntyre, 1991, 1993).

The focus on emotional aspect started to be seen a key factor in ensuring the individual's socialization in language learning process since human is a social being and could not be thought separate from the environment where s/he is living. In this sense, driven with the idea of sociocultural theory (Vygotsky, 1978), language learner should be utilized in her/his own learning context and her/his very own world of emotions. Learning a foreign or second language also comes true in all learning context with the emotional characteristics the learner has brought with. Moreover, learning another language has its own distinguishing features and context in which the learner is in need of extra attention because of the emotional load s/he is carrying. By the help of educational psychology and its reflection on learning theories in determining the exact developmental stage of the learner to support the emotional development properly, this study descriptively tries to represent how emotional development of a young learner fosters foreign language learning process. Besides, current studies on this subject are presented to form an opinion about the recent research and to keep up with the latest developments. Before explaining the need to put emotions into consideration in foreign language learning, it would be useful to clarify the meaning of emotion briefly.

Reeve (2005: 294) states that emotions are short-lived, feeling-arousal-purposive-expressive phenomena that help us adapt to the opportunities and challenges we face during important life events. For Aragao (2011: 302) emotions represent various ways being in relation to the dynamics of the immediate environment. According to Imai (2010: 279) emotions are not just an individual's private inner workings in response to external stimuli but are socially constructed acts of communication that can mediate one's thinking, behavior, and goals. In short, emotions are feelings that can be either positive or negative in its nature and they shape or are shaped by all the experiences of a living organism including the language learning as well. Thus, emotional development of a learner should also be the concern of the foreign language learning environment. Since this study basically focuses on the young learners, it would be worth mentioning to the current foreign language learning / teaching tendencies in global context to better understand the general trends and necessities for implicating in the emotional aspect.

With the impact of globalization, foreign language teaching has experienced several changes and developments. The growing need to communicate with other

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