

THE INFLUENCES OF NATIVE LANGUAGE ON ESTABLISHING THE IMMIGRANTS' IDENTITY

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Abstract: Language is used to express role relationships between individuals. The link between language and identity is often so strong that a single feature of language use suffices to identify someone's membership in a given group. If we hear people speak Italian, Japanese, or African American English, we assume they are Italian, Japanese, and African American, and if we hear English spoken with an Arabic accent, we assume the speaker to be an Arab. It means the language spoken by somebody and his or her identity as a speaker of this language are inseparable. Language is integral to the development of identity. The ways in which a person views the world are molded by their language development. This paper would like to discuss about the relationship between identity and language and how the native language influences on establishing the immigrants' identity.

Keywords: *language, identity, immigrants, native language, target language*

Communication is important for human since we, as human beings, are social creatures. Communication can be done by using language, so that language becomes crucial thing in human life. It can be said so since language can be used as a means of communication which can build human relationship. Like what Holmes (1992: 133) says, "People often use a language to signal their relationship of particular groups." It is also supported by Tabouret and Keller (cited in Wolfram, 2007: 315) who state that language is taken as the means of identifying oneself and as an external behavior allowing speaker as a member of some group. We can say that people use language to indicate social allegiances, that is, which groups they are members of and which groups they are not. In addition, they use language to create and maintain role relationships between individuals and between groups in such a manner that the linguistic varieties used by a community form a system that corresponds to the structure of the society. Language is used to express role relationships between individuals.

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Italian, Japanese, and African American, and if we hear English spoken an Arabic accent, we assume the speaker to be an Arab. A more subtle message, perhaps, conveyed by the accented voice is this, 'once an Arab, always an Arab'. You are what you are. Every individual is identical with itself. Le page and Tabouret_Keller says that Language acts are acts of identity (cited in Wolfram, 2007: 315). It means the language spoken by somebody and his or her identity as a speaker of this language are inseparable. Language is integral to the development of identity. The ways in which a person views the world are molded by their language development.

This is one example of how the native language influence on establishing identity; Felicia and her husband have permanently relocated to Canada. When her identity as a wealthy Spanish is validated among coworkers and others who know her history, she feels comfortable speaking English. If not, she felt silenced. She prefers not to speak among strangers on an elevator rather than risk the possibility of being positioned as an immigrant. Through portrayal of the example, it becomes clear that identity can influence how they understand their relationship to their new society and how they are treated. Therefore this paper would like to discuss about the relationship between identity and language and how the native language influences on establishing the immigrants' identity.

Language and Identity

Generally, identity is the stable and fixed aspects of selfhood: things that you check off on census forms such as; race or ethnicity, nationality, social class, sex, and age. Identities are stable features of persons that exist prior to any particular situation and dynamic and situated accomplishments, enacted through talk, and changing from one occasion to the next. Norton (2000:5) uses the term identity to refer to how a person understands her relationship to the world, how that relationship is constructed over time and space, and how the person understands possibilities for the future. At its core are basic human needs for recognition, affiliation, and safety, which often produce multiple and contradictory desires. Identity is therefore a site of struggle. While Thorn borrow (2004) says that identity, whether on an individual, social, or institutional level, is something that we are constantly building and negotiating throughout our lives through our interaction with others. The emphasis is on identities not essentially given but actively produced whether through deliberate, strategic manipulation or through out-of awareness practices. These both capture the agency of speakers and views language as social action (Paul Kroskrity, 2000: 112).

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Individuals' identities must be understood with reference to the larger social structure in which they live, because societies not only give us strong messages about whom we can be and to what we can aspire, they can actually forbid or curtail our participation in given social networks. A person's identity construction cannot be separated from the distribution of resources in society, because it is a person's access to resources that defines the terms on which her desires and their realization will be articulated. However, all this presumes the speaker is able to self-select their ethnicity, or more broadly, their identity. The work of the sociologist Goffman has been influential in showing that the self is constructed entirely through discourse, making our language choices of paramount importance to our identity construction. In fact, he states that personal identity is defined by how others identify us, not how we identify ourselves (cited in Chambers, 1963: 476). The speaker can attempt to influence how others perceive them, but ultimately it is the hearer who creates the speaker's identity. If the speaker is not allowed any influence on their own output, then the hearer is able to construct an identity for the speaker which may be entirely disparate from the speaker's desired identity. This allows the hearer an inordinate amount of power, and diminishes the self-sufficiency and independence of the speaker. This is a frequently used technique to control populations in settings as diverse as schools, prisons, and workplaces. It is also used in national language policies to extinguish the power associated with politically "subversive" and "inappropriate" languages, such as Catalan in Spain or Hokkien in Singapore. Being multilingual in the wrong languages is seen as an impediment to integration and hegemony, which is equated with harmony, although Coulmas (2005: 175) has pointed out that there is "no straight correlation between a single language such as English and positive ascriptions such as progress, peace, international understanding, or the enjoyment of human rights".

When people speak, they are not just exchanging information; they are constantly reorganizing a sense of who they are and how they relate to the social world. Therefore, when people speak a language, they are investing in an identity as speakers of that language. Additionally, immigrants who invest in a native language do so in the hopes of gaining access to resources such as education, friendship, and money. They hope to have a "good return" on their investment. This is one example of how the language influence the personal identity; Felicia and her husband had permanently relocated to Canada. When her identity as a wealthy Spanish was validated among

coworkers and others who knew her history, she felt comfortable speaking English. If not, she felt silenced. She preferred not to speak among strangers on an elevator rather than risk the possibility of being positioned as an immigrant. This woman has difficulties speaking English under such conditions of marginalization. Her struggles are ultimately successful when her coworkers learn that she has useful allies outside the workplace. Once her identity shifts to include status and respect, she feels more confident speaking to them.

Through portrayal of this example, it becomes clear that job competence can provide the symbolic capital necessary to claim the right to speak in the workplace. It also convinces us that an immigrant's past history, gender, age, and positions within the family can influence how they understand their relationship to their new society and how they create, respond to, and resist opportunities to speak English.

Neither identity nor language use is a fixed notion; both are dynamic, depending upon time and place (Le page and Tabouret_Keller cited in Wolfram, 2007: 315). How we perceive ourselves changes with our community of practice, allowing us multiple identities over the years or even within a day. In discussions of ethnic identity, many have pointed out that language is not a necessary requirement to identify with an ethnicity (e.g., a person may identify themselves as Irish yet not speak Gaelic). Additionally, an ethnic group or individual ascribing to that group may have a symbolic attachment to an associated language, but may use another more utilitarian language instead. More commonly an ethnic group identifies with a specific language: For the majority of Hispanics, the Spanish language runs deeply into cultural and personal identities. Spolsky's (1998: 57) eloquent phrasing of this principle captures the language-identity fusion: "Ethnic identity is twin skin to linguistic identity—I am my language". To relinquish Spanish either literally or symbolically (which many monolingual citizens of the United States seem to think is appropriate for integration into the country) is to relinquish a significant and powerful dimension of personal and social identity (Johnson, 2000: 177).

Language and Social Identity

Chambers says that language is a system of visual, auditory, or tactile symbols of communication and the rules used to manipulate them (2004: 475). Language is not only a vehicle for the expression of thoughts, perceptions, feelings and emotions, and values features of a community, but it also represents a basic expression of social identity.

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Language is an important element which influences cultural and intellectual aspects of human life. Not only language creates several communications among people but also it makes bilateral relation between different groups and societies. Events and realities are expressed by words and sentences. Politicians assert their abilities and their policies through language and words. Nowadays, since the role of media became very crucial we can learn about importance of language. So we can say individual's ideology, religious concepts and literature are indebted to the language and actually all of them shape social identity of a nation.

Identity is an umbrella term used throughout the social sciences to describe an individual's comprehension of him or herself as a discrete, separate entity. The notion of social identity is defined as the way that individuals label themselves as members of particular groups (e.g., nation, social class, subculture, ethnicity, gender, etc). Social identity is something like personality and individual identity (Giles, Judy and Tim Middleton. 1999: 200)

We can say that language is one of the most significant elements of social identity which gives a feeling of dependence or independence, superiority or inferiority and power or weakness. It even influences our personal identity as a part of social identity. It can specify our social level and our position. We categorize the social world and therefore perceive ourselves as members of various social groups. This is our social identity, which may be positive or negative depending on how our in group compares with relevant out groups. Social identity theory suggests that we strive to achieve a positive social identity as a means of increasing personal identity and self-esteem.

Bilingual Identity

Bilingual language use by a minority group is often analyzed as having two components: the “we” versus “they” code or the high versus low language (Zentella, 2002:82). The minority language “we” code represents in-group speech. It connotes intimacy and is largely confined to the home because it suffers lower prestige than the “they” code or high language, which is the language of the more powerful group and is associated with wealth and status. In an English speaking environment, Spanish speakers may choose to use Spanish to signify themselves as different from the dominant group, while simultaneously creating camaraderie with other Spanish speakers. These choices are made not only within situations, but within conversations.

Code switching is another form of language use, which can be at once exclusionary and inclusionary.

It serves to create an important sense of ‘them’ and ‘us’, as outsiders cannot easily share in this linguistic code. To insiders this is a legitimate form of communication with its own unconscious rules and forms. It serves as an important identity marker for the Spanish-speaking community, and like any linguistic code, is a dynamic, evolving symbol of solidarity. While outsiders may view code switching or code mixing as a deficient ability to speak English), 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” (Morales, 2002:3). So much of the discussion of multilingualism assumes that the speakers are equally proficient in all languages. But for many, although they have at least a fundamental proficiency in English, they are not comfortable with the language. Although able to create grammatically correct utterances, they are unable to fully express themselves and create their desired identity. They may rely on their primary language because it is a quicker and more effective communication tool. For many then, language is not a uniform that can be put on when they arrive at work and removed at the end of the day, but is integral to their being, in the way that religion or political affiliation is to others.

Reflection Of Native Language On Establishing Immigrant’s Identity

When the one asks ‘who am I?’ how do I relate to the social world? Under what condition I can speak? He is seeking to understand the complex relation among identity and language. When an immigrant interacts with a member of target language group, he is not only searching of words, phrases, and idiomatic expression, but also asking to what extent he will be able to impose reception on his interlocutor. Therefore, language comprehension engages the identities of immigrants, because language itself is not only a linguistics system of signs and symbols, it is also a complex social practice in which the value and meaning ascribed to an utterance are determined in part by the value and meaning ascribed to the person who speak. This view on language is interesting. It not only focuses on the mastery of the linguistics system of sign and symbols, but lays emphasis on the relationship between speaker’s identity and language. More social and psychological concepts are adopted and combined to produce a sound way to learn language.

The concept of investment, signals the society and historically constructed
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relationship of immigrants to the target language (Norton, 2000: 10). She takes the position that if an immigrant invests in a second language, he does so with the understanding that he will acquire a wider range of symbolic and material resources, she means such resources such as language, education, and friendship, whereas the term material resources refer to capital goods, real estate, and money. An immigrant expects to have good return on his investment on that language that will give him access to unattainable resources. The notion of investment conceives of the immigrant as having a complex social history and multiple desires. The notion presupposes that when immigrants speak, they are not only exchanging information with target language speakers, but they are constantly organizing and reorganizing a sense of who they are and how they are relate to the social world. The immigrant's investment in language learning is also an investment in immigrant's own identity which is constantly changing across time and space.

We believe that there is a strong tie between the native language in establishing the immigrant's identity. If the native language is considered very necessary and useful, and it will bring the immigrant the resources he dreams of (such as higher education, lifelong relationship, respectable social status, and fortune), and to be recognized by their environment, the immigrant will be willing to invest time and energy in language learning and will try to make great efforts to learn, with high motivation. Most of the experiment and investigation on immigrant's identity and native language are conducted in western world, with aim to help immigrants (for example, in The United Stated) to acquire the native language more efficiently in order to their identity.

All immigrants hope they can do something to make themselves known to others, and attain power to speak. If they fail to do so, or they cannot find a good way to do so, the may remain silent in their environment, day by day they may probably be neglected by their society. In a sense, his identity fails to be established.

CONCLUSION

We can conclude that the link between language and identity is often so strong that a single feature of language use suffices to identify someone's membership in a given group. If we hear people speak Italian, Japanese, or African American English, we assume they are Italian, Japanese, and African American, and if we hear English spoken an Arabic accent, we assume the speaker to be an Arab.

One of the many ways in which identity can be acquired is through one's native and foreign languages, culture, education, and way of life. Many people identify others by the language they are dominant in, the way they do things, and the way they vary their way of speaking depending on who they are talking with. The belief of belonging to a certain group has its origins in the language that someone speaks. Language definitely plays an essential role in a person's individuality since it is certainly a way of communicating one's identity. Humans have the ability to communicate through verbal communication. It is a way in which individuals are able to express and transmit their thoughts and emotions to others. Also, it gives the freedom to convey our thoughts and feelings without any obstacles or limitations. Without the means to communicate, human beings would be in a lost and incomprehensible world.

The advantage of speaking a second language opens a new window into people's lives. The individual can play different roles just by knowing another language and speaking in a certain way in one language and a completely different way in another language. In addition to this, language helps the individual to break down obstacles. Having a second language is a great benefit and a step forward. The way people speak differently depending on who they are talking with is an example of having different ways to communicate. However, when individuals want to impress someone or speak more correctly, their way of speaking is different than in their homes or with their friends. All languages have their distinct way of expressing joyfulness, sadness and other feelings. They might express completely different in their native language compared to the other one also known. People are not only transmitting their own culture, but they are also exploring and experiencing a distinct one and becoming more cultivated and knowledgeable of what is "outside" their own groups. Language also offers the opportunity of creating a "new" or different identity.

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