# PSYCHOLOGY OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE ACQUISITION FOR BUSINESS ENGINEERING PROFESSIONS

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*Abstract: Business Engineering students need quality instruction, input, interaction, and opportunities for meaningful output, not only to make progress, but also to maintain motivation for language learning. An effective professor will constantly point to the utility of the structures practised in class for the professional areas to be explored by graduates in their careers. This is mainly significant when English is not considered important for the students' immediate needs; hence it is relevant for instructors to identify learners' aims and needs and to develop proper study and documentation strategies to facilitate life-long learning. When designing a language course for business engineering English teaching purposes, cognitive psychology enriches the approach and emphasises the driving roles of concepts and situations in the textbook, thus further developing students' intelligence and linguistic competence.*

*Keywords: foreign language acquisition psychology, business engineering communication, life-long learning*

Increasingly, nowadays, psychological cognition and English teaching activity interrelate to enhance foreign language didactics effectiveness. The emerging result positively impacts students' learning styles and experiences, generating better academic performance. Cognitive psychology developed last century and became pivotal in research to explain reactions, activities and language adaptability by modification, acquisition, processing and information storage methods. At present, scientists investigate the comprehension mechanisms that enable subsequent information transfer processes in foreign language learning. Cognitive psychology acknowledges the basic roles of language development and modern information processing for students' intellectual development. Both are systems operating with symbols, so learning is actually organizing information and then continuously processing it. Knowledge building also refers to the integration of the psychological experience, structure and data that interact in the teaching process. Hence psychological cognition principles applied to foreign language didactics facilitate learning content from related disciplines and then assembling the new data in constructive and original modalities during life-long learning. Thus academic English teaching will focus on linguistic structures to match business behaviours.

Foreign language skills enable students to widely interact with professionals on the labour market, to contribute to society in more relevant ways, and to better cooperate with others in team work. The situational models in textbook materials allow for the perception of different business contexts selectively, thus improving interactions.

In addition to knowledge authority, the professor is also organizer, guider and supervisor, showing the students how to proceed with cognition further, in independent

learning environments. In the didactic process teachers should use real-life scenarios, providing relevant clues for students' problem solving skills. Real life tasks and simulations prompt learners to identify additional material and information in other media; the most relevant pieces will be analysed with the professor in guided discussions and reflection, meant to cultivate students' critical thinking skills. Finding advantages and disadvantages, summarizing their learning method and predicting future situations will make business engineering graduates better equipped for the world of work nowadays.

Theoreticians applied this line of reasoning to second language acquisition and predicted a more difficult parcourse for second language acquisition in adolescents and adults, as compared to children, due to differences in brain plasticity. However, an opposing group of linguists downplay the role of the biological clock in second language learning. They argue that adolescents can be the fastest language learners in all areas except pronunciation, then come the adults, and last rank school-age children. A possible explanation is that adolescents and adults use their better-developed abilities for abstract logical reasoning to achieve an analytical understanding of the new language being studied, while children can only reason about language in relatively concrete terms. In addition to this capacity for meta-linguistic awareness, adolescents can add a child-like willingness to experiment and play with language, and so they become the speediest second language learners. Regardless of which view of the biological timetable issue seems more compelling to the educator, it is clear that certain cognitive factors such as verbal intelligence, phonological processing ability, and long-term memory capacity strongly influence the student's ability to learn a second language.

Second language acquisition researcher S. Krashen developed the concept of an affective filter, consisting of the variables of anxiety, motivation, and self-confidence, which can impede on linguistic acquisition. According to him, these psychological variables may strongly enhance or inhibit second language acquisition by playing a critical mediating role between the linguistic input available in the educational setting and the student's ability to learn. In order for students to fully engage their innate capacity to acquire language within an input-rich environment, they should be relaxed, motivated, and self-confident. Unfortunately many learners of English often feel anxious, discouraged, and embarrassed in classroom setting.

Second language learning in all of its aspects demands that the individual, to a certain extent, should take on a new identity. Since an individual's identity is developed within a context of communication and interaction with family members and peers, and since language plays a key role in interpersonal relations, language becomes central to the sense of self. Changing this basic sense of who one is can be difficult, particularly where the individual's sense of self-efficacy or clear confidence in own key abilities is challenged in the process. Competence in communicating with others is obviously a central ability to the individual's self esteem.

To acquire linguistic competence in a foreign language requires ego strength, which is the ability to retain a sense of self esteem even when exposing and exploring an area of real weakness. Researcher J. Schumann explores the concept of language shock, a

fear of appearing comical or making a fool of oneself when attempting to communicate in another language. The student's social inhibitions and fear of criticism may function to decrease inner motivation to learn English as a second language and to master course content expressed in English. The anxiety and disorientation that the international student (or the immigrant) faces in entering a new culture, which Schumann defines as culture shock, can further complicate the learning process for these students. If we notice that a student acquiring English is reticent to speak up in class discussions, we need to be aware of the possibility that the student is facing the frustrations of language and culture shock. They need to be helped to become full participants in the educational process, rather than be passive audience in the seminar. Professors should show willingness to work non-judgmentally and assist them in developing better communicative capacities in English, which in turn will increase their motivation and achievement.

In considering the range of psychological variables which may either facilitate or inhibit the efforts of new learners of English, we should not overlook the issue of power. English may well be perceived by the international student as the language of a rich and powerful post-industrial society, while the native language may be seen as somehow less impressive and respected. This perceived differential between the power and respectability of the native language and that of English could be expected to aggravate the psychological difficulties which interfere with language learning: anxiety, low self-esteem and motivation, identity conflict, language shock and culture shock.

As one way of easing the newly arrived immigrant or international student's conflictual identification with the English language and culture, these issues could be explicitly addressed by incorporating them into the class curriculum. The opportunity to design classroom activities (such as student presentations and culture circles) which address issues of acculturation and invite valuing and sharing of personal experience as well as use of native language would seem particularly fitted to other business engineering course areas, not only the foreign language class.

Jim Cummins' reciprocal interaction model of education sees a network of meaningful oral and written communication among students and teachers as the matrix of learning. Student-directed projects, presentations and classroom discussions supplement the traditional lecture format. In this way, validation of minority students' cultural experiences becomes a very powerful tool for actively involving new speakers of English in the learning experiences happening within the classroom.

This attitude stands in opposition to the traditional English-only approach to working with international students and other non-native speakers of English in the classroom. Transmission pedagogy models, as Cummins explains, exclude and suppress students' seminar experiences in the interest of establishing a one-way flow of information from the teacher to the students. In this too-familiar pedagogical approach, the teacher passively transmits, the students passively receive and the school authorities have exclusive control of the learning process while minimizing students' participatory involvement. Thus the basic function of language, meaningful communication, tends to get lost in a dynamic which eventually inhibits language

learning.

Interactive or experiential pedagogy, by contrast, would seek to incorporate the students' expression of cultural and language experiences in the classroom in order to validate students' linguistic and cultural backgrounds as well as to stimulate their active participation in classroom learning. The challenge for educators is to find ways of inviting and structuring such participation within the learning community so that both foreign language students and native speakers achieve the fullest possible benefits.

The lack of interactive conversation activities that include learning techniques to improve students' linguistic capacities translates into low speech performance. English learning development always depends on the enthusiasm all students manifest towards the subject of business English. The traits and components of each personality make interlocutors unique, and it is important for professors to take into account the differences among individuals, their various ways of learning languages and the environment in which they are involved in order to facilitate linguistic progress.

English is a world language and it has become ever more important in society, and the public can see how private institutions strive to increase their own levels of achievement in this area. However, in universities, mixed-ability groups predominate, and discrepancies are significant, depending on the environment of origin for each student.

Learning languages, especially English, is both a necessity and a challenge because today's graduates face the job market of the globalised world. The differences between individuals, their learning conditions and the contexts in which they study are aspects that make the difference when it comes to learning a foreign language.

We can get instruments capable of guiding didactic performance towards improvement. In this sense, the learning processes of the foreign language constitute an interest of great relevance for those who move in the field of teaching. All professors focus on deepening knowledge of the facilitators for the learning process, i.e. the psycho-affective, social, and educational factors that influence idiom acquisition.

Therefore, the need arises to clarify relevant issues that directly impact students' learning process and how to approach them. In a nutshell, it all refers to the biological structure of the individual that through its inheritance, maturation process, hormonal influence, nervous system and biotype constitution will determine a unique personality, able to face reality in specific ways.

In the past, much of language learning was restricted to an elite academic current, which had demonstrated its ability to cope with abstract logical-deductive thinking and verbal learning of the type required in school settings, for example, for the study of grammar, the application of grammar rules in composition exercises and the translation of literary texts. Such students were considered to have a high IQ measured by a clearly verbal test.

In recent years, H. Gardner has called attention to the existence of multiple intelligences: verbal, mathematical-logical, spatial, kinaesthetic, musical, interpersonal and intrapersonal. Now that the emphasis is on language learning for all students, we must consider ways to allow students who are strong in any of these areas to apply their

particular types of intelligence to language learning tasks, and see that our procedures of evaluation will provide opportunities to demonstrate their progress in using the language.

Whether we are responsible, introverted, extroverted, sensitive or insensitive, each of us has a special combination of personality traits that will make us unique. Acquiring a new idiom will mainly be based on the social and cognitive particularities modulated by the affective domain.

Personality factors are universally acknowledged by researchers in the second language learning to play an important role in the foreign language learning as well. There are several reasons for the language teachers to take personality factors into consideration in linguistic acquisition. Emotions are fully involved and ignoring them will negatively impact learning outcomes and teaching strategies. The extent of an individual's ability to get information depends on his/her individual personality.

According to different studies, the acquisition of a foreign language is influenced by a series of factors that will strengthen or weaken it. Technically, the term acquisition refers to collecting language communication skills through exposure while the term learning, on the other hand, refers to the conscious study of the other language. The second language may refer to foreign and host languages other than the mother tongue. English often has the official status of a strong second language. In general, learning another idiom is not a set of easy steps. It is rather a long and complex task in which a student has to struggle to reach beyond the confines of his/her first language into a new language. It is possible that some work hard to get the knowledge of the foreign language, while others can obtain high level skills without many problems; still, many of them are governed by certain needs and interests that influence how they actually perform.

Personality is the individual ensemble of characteristics that determine potentialities and common abilities, and it is exclusively particular to an individual. It includes those aspects of an individual's behaviour, attitude, beliefs, thoughts, actions and feelings which are seen as typical and distinctive of that person and recognized as such by that person and others. The personality factor refers to a feature or a quality that is assumed to distinguish one student from another in the process of acquiring another language and it is considered to be a pattern of unique characteristics that give a person's behaviour consistency and individuality. In the case of the second language, personality factors such as motivation, aptitude and attitude are believed to indirectly influence the process of learning. Therefore, for language teachers to teach the new idiom successfully is not merely a question of whether or not the teachers have sufficient linguistic knowledge or the issue of teachers' diversifying teaching methodologies and techniques. Instead, it is the question of whether or not a learner uses a series of study strategies and styles that are grounded in his/her personality.

Though people are mostly born with similar potentialities and abilities, the degree of success and the degree of failure in accomplishing things will be different. Both depend on will and efforts which might be influenced by personal ways of thinking, acting or behaving, indirectly linked to the individual personality factors. Therefore, to

learn another language successfully is to develop the positive personality factors that facilitate the learners' attempts in acquiring the new language.

As well as this, it is undeniable that attitude is one of the most important personality factors which indirectly influence the level of proficiency gained by different learners. The way a student develops his/her linguistic abilities is mostly influenced by the attitude that s/he processes, either to a target language or a target culture. To substantiate the theoretical assertions about the relationship between attitude and learning another language, a number of studies have been carried out and it has been found that attitude and other affective variables are as important as aptitude for language achievement and that positive and non-positive attitudes have deep reasons for their emergence

All in all, individual personality factors, motivation, attitude, acculturation, self-esteem, sociability, risk-taking, and perseverance are believed to significantly influence the learners' degree of success in acquiring another language. How they learn and what they learn, empathy, inhibition levels, and learner autonomy may also facilitate learners' efforts and attempts to express themselves in another language.

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