

Case study language acquisition

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Throughout my life I have encountered and worked with adults that come from different native backgrounds.

Many of them come to America in search of better opportunities. As a result, they come with their first language mastered and now they must learn a second language. America continues to be the destination of immigrants around the world. Millions will continue coming here even by risking their lives. This paper is very important, as an educator I will consistently meet implies and students learning English.

It will also help me further understand difficulties LA learners face allowing me to tackle these problems with more efficiency.

I hope to answer specific questions; what are mistakes made by LA learners? What role does motivation play in language learning? How does a person's social setting play a role? What are reasons for code switching? 2. Study Participant I chose to use Mrs. L. My lunch aide that I have been working with for multiple years now.

She is in her 30's and was born and raised in Italy. We always have meaningful invitations and we've always been very open with one another.

She always tells me I remind her of her son and we're able to converse about things most coworkers wouldn't share with one another. Most immigrants that I have known come from Latin backgrounds and hers is Italian, which provides me with a different perspective with LA learners. She got her early education in Italy and then came to America like many immigrants.

She had to adapt to her new life and learn the language. Mrs. I is very proud of her culture and upbringing. She often compares our student's upbringing to her own. She mentions that a lot of the behavior wouldn't be tolerated in Italy.

In our school there are many students that come from broken homes and she has expressed that marriage is for life! Her strong views come from the way she was brought up. 3. Data Collection A. Data was collected through various forms. Like mentioned above, some was collected through spontaneous conversation. We have a very good relationship and we are very open with one another.

The majority was collected through naturalistic observations and written notes. Lunch is held in the classroom and she comes in to attend my class. I personally choose to stay in my room to avoid all the gossip.

I am able to see her interact with students in a natural way. B.

This allowed me to take systematic notes and observe language use. 4. Data Analysis and Findings Through our conversations, we always share our thoughts and I am able to make connections because my parents are immigrants. When she got to America she could not speak the language. She felt lonely and had bitter feelings about leaving her native country. In Italy, she knew who she was and contained an identity.

Once she moved, Tanat securely Lanker no longer exalts. Ana t I let near Walt meal emotions.

She was going through “ acculturation” and many LA learners go through this process (Brown p. 182). Immigrants may have to leave their native countries for various reasons. Some are “ forced” to leave due to economic hardships; these factors may cause an individual to obtain feelings of anger and resentment. Still she has mentioned that she felt lonely and unwanted at the time.

I can tell it’s a part of her life that she did not enjoy. Thankfully, Mrs.. I came voluntary and was motivated to learn the new language and culture.

Our book explains, “ Language is central to the process of learning culture, and cultural patterns teach the appropriate way to communicate.

The intertwined nature of the process is called language colonization” (2012, p. 220). Through my experiences, when immigrants come to America most say they wish to learn the new language. It seems like the “ right” thing to say but actions speak louder than words. She took action and began taking LA classes, she watched television, and practiced with friends and family, her motivation was apparent to those around her.

Eve always believed that if a person sets realistic locals and takes the necessary steps, accompanied with hard work, those areas are reachable.

Therefore, I m not surprised she is able to speak English as well as she does. I was surprised and wondered if other immigrants could have been as successful if they applied the same dedication. Recently, I worked with an ELL student in the 8th grade and this is his third year in the school system.

He was very unmotivated and I was shocked to observe how little he knew especially since students with less time and practice already knew more.

Students were able to read with accents and made many grammatical errors.

For example, many had difficulties with silent consonants like ink and MBA. He was very capable but he just wanted to be "cool". Through observations it's apparent that a person's social setting plays a major role. The student speaks Spanish and lives in Union City, so he is very capable of talking to others in the community. On the other hand Mrs.

. I did not want to feel alone anymore. Anyone coming to a new country learning a LA has to accept that changes will occur. At first, she was afraid to speak and volunteer due to the fear of making mistakes.

I learned and never considered that many immigrants must juggle two cultures.

For example, Mrs. I now lives in Union City, which contains a population of mostly Hispanic backgrounds. She still feels Italian more than anything and she always visits family in New York and loves the neighborhoods associated with her culture and language. She expresses that they make her feel at home and it reminds her of her childhood. Personally, I also believe there's deeper meaning behind her feelings.

In Italy she never feared making mistakes and could be herself.

This was her natural setting where she felt comfortable and didn't have to worry about someone judging her language. I further learned that in order for an ELL learner to maximize the language they must find ways to balance both worlds. Mrs. I learned English as a young adult so she speaks with an accent.

She also makes pronunciation errors and I can tell that her EI affects her LA. For example, she told a student to "get over ear" (here), many of the students quietly chuckled. I noticed she makes errors involving the letter h. "Go to the bathroom and ray (hurry).

I also noticed that she would mispronounce words that contained the letter (l).

Many times he is able to catch her own mistakes, she explained that in Italian the way E and I are pronounced causes confusion. In Angels n. Brown states, "Late learners make more morphological mistakes and rely more heavily on fixed forms in which internal morphological elements are frozen in place and therefore often used inappropriately" (2012, p. 152). I was also able to observe conversations she held with her husband. They both speak English but at times she finds herself searching for words, therefore she relays the message in Italian so it's clear.

It's not that she can't relay her message in English it's just that in Italian she can really drive home her point. When she does speak to him in English she will say certain words in her EI. Her EI vocabulary must be better when compared to her LA. This concept did not surprise me at all. When I speak

Spanish I can get my point across but if I really want to express my thoughts English works better.

When I speak to Latin Americans a lot of the time we talk Spangling a mixture of both languages. The majority of the time she code switches when she speaks to him, it's more natural for her.

As the author notes, code switching is influenced by the “ situation”. As a result when she speaks to her husband she adapts to the situation. Owens tells us, “ They typically code switch from one language to the other.

The speaker's age and education and the social situation influence the efficacy of code switching (2012, page. 31). There are various things I would do differently if I could do this study over again. It would've been great to see Mrs.. I interact with close friends outside of work.

I know many of her friends consist of co-workers that are not Italian. It would be interesting to discover how she speaks to them.

Maybe she feels comfortable and still code switches teaching her friends Italian words. I would also be able to observe if she is conscious of her mistakes or if she pays it any mind. For example, Mrs..

I doesn't feel any pressure around me because she knows I m not Judging her. I m also a lot younger and she says I m like her son. On the other hand, her peers are in her age group, I wonder if her feelings would change around them. I believe she would speak freely and wouldn't worry but like the book says language learners adapt to different situations. This next observation would have been challenging.

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I would've loved to see Mrs.

. I in an Italian neighborhood. This would have allowed me to gauge how comfortable and “ happy’ she feels when she’s in her natural setting. We all act different depending on situations but the book made me wonder if ELL’s face this more often. She is able to balance both worlds but it would have been nice to see her on the “ other side” for a longer time.

Finally, I would have also liked to conduct a formal interview with her.

Throughout the years Eve learned so much about her but by asking her specific questions I may have learned new information. 5. Implications for Teaching

Throughout this case study I realized how important culture is especially for ELL learners. Many of them come to a new country and it’s easy to forget about the culture shock they face. Our curriculum is based on America’s tradition and as educators we have to find ways to include others as well.

It’s a way of learning (words, foods, culture, etc.) and it builds student confidence. Not only are students learning new language skills they are also adapting to a new world. They are caught in the middle and they should feel good about this transition because their culture and language is not something that should be forgotten.