

Emotional Intelligence and Second Language Education Beyond Culture

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In teaching and learning second languages, we have focussed on stimulus-response and motivation. But now the researchers are more interested in internal world, the brains and emotions.

How the brains are functioning should be studied first. Because learning and teaching languages are mental actions. The following examines the relationship between the brains and the capacity of language acquisition, especially how one of the emotions, anxiety affects the students in studying another language. Most teachers are apt to think that the learners have more responsibility in classrooms, but I think teachers' attitude or behavior gives more influence on the learners.

Teachers can find the students' ability and capacity to get the knowledge of second language by obtaining their intelligence. But to develop the learners' intelligence in language acquisition, I think, the teachers should consider more how emotions are related to encouraging the students' language learning ability. Therefore, I'd like to study the relationship between brain function and anxiety in language education.

Brains

H. Brown (1987) cites a study of Left-and Right-brain Functioning. Left-and right-brain dominance is often considered to be a cognitive style in that preferences for left and right functioning are found to differ across individuals and across cultures. Some data are beginning to be gathered on the relationship between left-and right-brain functioning and second language learning. Krashen, Seliger, and Hartnett (1974) found support for the hypothesis that left-brain-dominant second language learners preferred a deductive style of teaching, while right-brain dominant learners appeared to be more successful in an inductive classroom environment. Stervick (1982) concluded that left-brain-dominant second language learners are better at producing separate words, gathering the specifics of language, carrying out sequences of operations, and dealing with abstraction, classification, labeling, and recognizing. Right-brain-dominant learners, on the other hand, appear to deal better with whole images, with generalizations, with metaphors, and with emotional and artistic expressions.

Joel L. Swerdlow (1995) has already said that naturally occurring chemicals in the body respond to external and internal stimuli. He also notes as follows: Howard Gardner's influential *Frames of Mind: the Theory of Multiple Intelligences* argues that every individual has one or more of seven distinct intelligences-such as spatial, linguistic, and musical. Does each "intelligence" have its own physical manifestation? Gardner resists putting too much faith in physical findings. "Intelligence is a capacity," he says. "To ask 'where in the brain

is intelligence?’ is like asking, where is the voice in the radio?”

I think that the brains are not the brains without the stock of memory. Because intelligence is driven by memory and information in the brain.

Anxiety

In learning and teaching second languages, most barriers come from anxiety. Therefore, I'd like to report how anxiety affects people.

A somewhat more relevant aspect of the research on anxiety lies in the distinction between debilitating and facilitative anxiety. We may be inclined to view anxiety as a negative factor, something to be avoided at all costs. For example, we are all familiar with the feeling of “test anxiety” before a big examination. But the notion of facilitative anxiety is that some concern-some apprehension-over a task to be accomplished is a positive factor.

Otherwise, a learner might be inclined to be “wishy-washy,” lacking the facilitative tension that keeps one poised, alert and just slightly unbalanced to the point when one cannot relax entirely. The feeling of nervousness before giving a public speech is, in experienced speakers, often a sign of facilitative anxiety, a symptom of just enough tension to get the job done.

Anxiety, other researchers have observed, comes in two forms: cognitive, or worrisome thought, and somatic, the physiological symptoms of anxiety, such as sweating, a racing heart or muscle tension. The main trouble with insomniacs, Borkovec found, was not the somatic arousal. What kept them up were intrusive thoughts. They were chronic worries, and could not stop worrying, no matter how sleepy they were. The one thing that worked in helping them get to sleep was getting their minds off their worries, focussing instead on the sensations produced by a relaxation method. In short, the worries could be stopped by shifting attention away (Goleman, 1996).

Anxiety weakens the intellect. In a complex, intellectually demanding, and high-pressure task such as that of air traffic controllers, for example, having chronically high anxiety is an almost sure predictor that a person will eventually fail in training or in the field. The anxious are more likely to fail even given superior scores on intelligence tests.

Daniel Goleman (1996) noted that anxiety also sabotages academic performance of all kinds: 126 different studies of more than 36,000 people found that the more prone to worries a person is, the poorer their academic performance, no matter how measured—grades on tests, grade-point average, or achievement tests.

Our thinking on learning is inevitably influenced by the psychological knowledge that is part of the common understanding of human behavior in our culture. No doubt, such psychological terms as ‘remembering’, ‘forgetting’, ‘skill’, ‘motivation’, ‘frustration’, ‘inhibitions’, and so on will form part of our analysis. The importance of psychology and psycholinguistics to a theory of language teaching is hardly in question today, some of the most debated issues which have created a stir in language teaching theory in recent years refer to the psychology of second language learning. Thus, the debate on the role of habit

versus cognition or the discussion of the relationship between first and second language acquisition are based on different psychological interpretations of language learning and psychological arguments and counter-arguments (H.H. Stern, 1986).

New brain researchers suggest that emotions, not IQ, may be the true measure of human intelligence.

The phrase, emotional intelligence was coined by Yale psychologist, Peter Salovey and the University of New Hampshire's John Mayer few years ago to describe qualities like understanding one's own feelings, empathy for the feelings of others and "the regulation of emotion in a way that enhances living".

Anxiety is a rehearsal for danger. A little anxiety helps focus the mind; too much can paralyze it.

Anxiety serves a similar useful purpose, so long as it doesn't spin out of control. Worrying is a rehearsal for danger; the act of fretting focuses the mind on a problem so it can search efficiently for solutions. The danger comes when worrying blocks thinking, becoming an end in itself or a path to resignation instead of perseverance. Overworrying about failing increases the likelihood of failure; fall even further. Therefore, sportsplayers say "confidence" is the key to success in winning the game.

Researchers believe that about 90% of emotional communication is nonverbal. Harvard psychologist Robert Rosenthal developed the PONS test (Profile of Nonverbal Sensitivity) to measure a person's ability to read emotional cues.

Some psychologists go further and challenge the very idea that emotional skills can or should be taught in any kind of formal, classroom way. EQ is also innate (Time, October, 1995).

The power of feelings

The brain research has been continuing. In learning and studying second languages, most people are concerned about students' side but I think we have to consider how the teacher's brain affects the students emotionally.

It stands to reason that humans would have a specialized region of the brain for processing emotional perceptions and memories: if our distant ancestors hadn't had an instant and violent reaction to danger, they wouldn't have lived very long. But other parts of the brain are apparently also involved in feeling emotions. What's most surprising is the assertion by the University of Iowa's Damasio that emotion is central to the process of rational thought.

In fact says Damasio, emotion is a key element of learning and decision making. If an investment goes sour, you feel bad about it and act more carefully next time.

Observes Damasio: "We can't decide whom we are going to marry, what savings strategy to adopt where to live, on the basis of reason alone."

The Damascos suspect that convergence zones-thousands of them, spread through the cortex-do more than just process language. They may also coordinate every other sort of

information the brain needs-perception, memory, emotions-to be fully functional. And if that's true, the convergence zones, merging disparate pieces of information into a semblance of a whole, could be responsible for elusive of brain phenomena: consciousness, the sense of being in here and now. (Time, July, 1995).

Skinner (1938) differentiates respondent behavior, always tied to specific stimuli, and emitted behavior, which are not closely tied. A class of emitted behavior is referred to as an operants. Operants are situation tied, even though not tied to highly specific stimuli. When an operant appears only in the presence of certain stimuli it is said to be a discriminative operant. As behavior occurs more frequently on appropriate occasions, it is said to increase in response probability. Skinner takes the position that learning during childhood slowly brings the behavior under stimulus control.

Skinner's discriminative operant maybe related to students' emotion or feeling. Most teachers know students can learn more with teachers whom they like. I think most students in any country want to study second language with less pressure. If a student can learn second language with a right teacher in a comfortable place, EQ (emotion quotient) would be developed. Because normal human brains will work logically. Students can learn more how to make or build their ways of thinking in second language.

Ovando (1985) uses the term "socioaffective filter" to describe all social and emotional factors which affect the learner's acquisition of L2. All teachers know that students don't learn or acquire everything in L2 to which they are exposed. Some input may be incomprehensible or nonmeaningful. Other input may be missed by the student because of conscious or unconscious emotional or social factors which keep the student from taking in maximum input at the time. Many attitudes studies in L2 acquisition have shown positive influence on L2 acquisition of low anxiety, self-esteem and self-confidence, an outgoing personality, and high motivation.

Implications

When should Learners be corrected? There has been little empirical evidence to suggest when to correct second language errors. More destructive research is needed to determine the attitudes of students and toward producing and correcting errors in the classroom. Experimental research should focus on the cognitive effects of error correction based on different levels of language proficiency and relevant personality factors such as willingness to take risks. For the present, teachers can consider which student's errors should be allowed to remain uncorrected.

Those approaches to language learning are also related to emotional or psychological approaches. If a student's mistakes were corrected by a teacher's kind and favorable advice, he could develop his second language knowledge more effectively. Because minor grammatical or structural errors are less important than meaning in communication.

In Readers' Digest (October, 1996), Kiestre, Jr. also suggests and gives us examples how important it is to encourage the learners. "Good!" you exclaim when the little one first

learns to drink from a cup. Praising your child's accomplishments not only brings peals of delight from the child but also reinforces connections between the frontal cortex and the amygdala in the midbrains, the seat of emotions. Between ten and 18 months, the brain is making these connections. When you praise Baby's first steps, making Baby happy, a flood of neurochemicals is released in the brain, strengthening the circuit. Conversely, if Baby's achievements are repeatedly met with indifference, the circuits fail to strengthen, and Baby becomes reluctant to try new things.

What was mentioned above points out brains and emotions are very affected in developing human beings' intelligence. In Japanese schools, education has been more serious especially in classrooms. Teachers are completely like teaching machines. The students are rarely praised by their teachers. Accordingly, Japanese students have had lack of creativity. That means they cannot have intelligence in making new ideas. If we had known the relation between brains and emotions, and studied it more actively, we could have developed and encouraged the students in improving their intelligence. Now gradually many teachers started to be interested in praising students in teaching fields.

Most English lessons in Japan are controlled by the teachers pedantically. Therefore, the students have almost no chances to show or give their opinions. Anxiety and pressure make their ideas and creativity weak and poor.

Emotions and intelligence are related to each other very closely. We have paid too much attention on the students in learning and teaching languages. But now, we should be much more interested in having English classrooms with emotional approach to develop the students' intelligence in learning another language.

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