



LINGUISTIC SHAME AND SHAMING IN THE SRI LANKAN ESL CLASSROOM

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ABSTRACT

Language acquisition or language learning has been regarded by many scholars as uniquely individualized experience which encompasses numerous complex aspects including cognitive, psychological, emotional and social factors that affect the learning process. Specifically, within the sphere of second or foreign language learning, many factors exterior to the cognitive capacity of the language learner, such as the social factors, manage to elicit psychological, physical and emotional responses, often negative, from the learner which directly affect and often predicts the success or the failure of the learning process. These physiological and psychological responses are often associated with the concept of shame and shaming and often materialize in the L2 classroom as linguistic and social discrimination, where learners' inadequacy in terms of language proficiency and social status is used as the basis for discrimination. The frequency with which these circumstances are observed in the Sri Lankan L2 classroom mandates the need for further investigation of this phenomenon in gaining better insights into the language learning process of the learners and understand the factors that hinder language acquisition. Therefore, this research aims at collecting and analysing qualitative data on adult L2 English language learners in Sri Lanka, where the focus is on acquiring insights into the responses of the learner and past learner experiences in facing such discrimination. The study is carried out as semi-structured, face-to-face interviews where I, as the researcher and a lecturer of English as a second language, would attempt at gaining a better understanding of the L2 learner requirements in Sri Lanka. Therefore, the research will investigate the pervasiveness of shame as an emotional response to language inadequacy among the adult ESL learners in Sri Lanka and the psychological and physical manifestations of shame observed in the learner, the impact of linguistic and social discrimination on the learning process and learner's linguistic and social identity as a user (or inadequate user) and a learner of English and finally the reasons for the existence of linguistic shaming and psychological or physiological coping mechanisms exhibited by the learners.

Keywords: Linguistic Shaming, L2 Classroom, Adult learners, Language Inadequacy