



On the Necessity of the Ontological Analysis of identity Formation and Its linkage to the Language Acquisition Theories

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Abstract. Research directed at the relationship between identity and SLA has widely captured the attention of applied linguists since the last two decades. Nonetheless, there has been dearth of research regarding the tracing of the historical and philosophical origins of this multidimensional notion. This study aims to probe the ways that philosophical reflections and historical transformations have influenced the definition of identity and consequently the learning theories and teaching methods of language. The results of this descriptive-analytic research, by drawing on the works of modern and postmodern philosophers and sociologists, revealed that theories of language acquisition and the nature of language were indisputably inspired by the definition of human identity in diverse historical eras (traditional, modern and postmodern). Accordingly, the study showed that without resorting to the philosophical reflections and historical events it is not feasible to profoundly understand the underlying reasons for the noted paradigm shifts in SLA theories.

Key Words: Identity formation, Language acquisition, postmodern identity, SLA

1. INTRODUCTION

Introduction of an operational definition of the construct of Identity has been among the most cumbersome and controversial issues in the field of human science. Due to the polarized locus of identity which encompasses human body, the society, history and many other elements, it has still remained as the site of struggle. To put it more simply, identity cannot be defined without resorting to its social, psychological and philosophical representations. Since identity deals with the essence of humanity, varieties of academic disciplines have investigated its linkage to a host of other variables to find answers to their many profound questions regarding human agency. Analysis of identity in second language acquisition studies was no exception. For a long time there has been controversy over different conceptualizations from identity. During the domination of religious elites, intellectuals confirmed that the core of human identity is the love and respect for God. It should be noted that they didn't ignore other manifestations of identity like linguistic identity, national identity, but believed that these aspects are periphery and of trivial significance. The intellectuals of enlightenment and modernity age replaced the reason and logic for faith and devotion to God as the core constituents of human identity. On the other hand, Post modernity scholars rejected both of them by claiming that identity is multiple, sight of struggle, in the state of flux and there is no coherent core for human subjectivity and agency. Each of these conceptualizations from identity amply inspired the theories of language learning and teaching.

In the realm of SLA, the nexus between identity and language acquisition gained momentum after the limitations of psychologically oriented theories of motivation were put into question by scholars from diverse fields. Norton Pierce (1995) implied that the acquisition of second language involves far too complex processes than what cognitive and behaviorist theorist have

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thus far proposed. She indicated that learners' appropriation to the new language not only encompasses cognitive processes but also constant negotiation of the learner's identity with the texts, teachers, interlocutors and other extra-linguistic factors. The multiplicity and contradictory nature of identities even at the same time and space and variability in the social positions on the behalf of the learners, led to concentrated effort of scholars to reflect on the learners identity and language learning experience. Bourdieu (1997) inspired by poststructuralist philosophers such as (Foucault, Derrida, Lyotard, Barth) argued that identity is a relational term, by which he meant that in some events learners are in the state of holding power while at other times they are subject to the terms of power relationship. He went on to say that human agency in each of these conditions is different and the ways of learning and behaving are diverse too. It should be noted that theories of identity were mostly originated from a host of fields involving sociology, anthropology, psychology, philosophy and so forth. Most of these diverse definitions from identity have been hugely inspired by philosophical contemplations. To be more specific, the philosophical reflections and historical events gave birth to the new and sometimes contradictory descriptions of identity. Modern philosophers believed in the essentialist nature of human claiming that rationality is the inseparable core of human being, while postmodern philosophers rejected the founding principles of essentialism and believed in the multiple and dynamic nature of human identity.

Undoubtedly, exploring the roots of these modifications in diverse historical eras is of utter significance for linguistic, social and philosophical studies. The philosophical analysis of the essence of identity by drawing on the works of modern and postmodern philosophers, despite the inherent complexities, sheds light on the formulation processes of this multifaceted notion in its most abstract form, which in turn will be of extensive and exponential application in the field of linguistics and language acquisition studies. With respect to this analysis it can be figured out that how traditional identity led to modern identity and then the postmodern identity. This philosophical and historical analysis also signifies that SLA theorists are indebted to philosophers in their splendid contribution to the field of applied linguistics. The field that started with the shallow concepts of grammar translation method has now incorporated an overwhelmingly number of theories for SLA including socio-cultural theories, socio-cognitive theories, probabilistic, functional, computational, and statistical and many other theories of SLA.

This study strives to trace the procedures and events which played a monumental role in the present conceptualizations of identity in traditional, modern and post-modern era and also strived to give the researchers the authority and needed prospect to at least partially envisage the future modifications of identity definitions and its incontrovertible impacts on the theories of first and second language acquisition. The research indicates how attitudes toward human subjectivity and agency as Norton (2000) defines, have witnessed dramatic changes during history. It is tangible that despite the salience of philosophical and historical analysis they have been widely disregarded in SLA literature due to their inherent complexity and multidimensional nature. Consequently this study will contribute to a more profound realization from this overwhelmingly complex and multidimensional notion.

1. Overview of different approaches to identity

Identity is among those contested constructs which can be approached from multiple perspectives. It is somehow impossible to elucidate this concept without resorting to other variables. Identity as Turner (1986) maintains is a relational term which can be investigated and defined in relation to polarized social and contextual features. For this reason, a host of disciplines have their specific characterization of this notion. This salient social, cultural and psychological concept has so far been classified into different categories by a number of scholars. One of the best taxonomy offered by Wenger (1998) includes: 1) Individual identity (Ericson, 1975) 2) Social Identity (Tajfel, 1986; Turner, 1986) 3) cultural identity (Trissa1985;

On the Necessity of the Ontological Analysis of identity Formation and Its linkage to the Language Acquisition Theories

Norton1998), collective identity (Melluci, 1995) and philosophical identity (Derrida, 1980). In order to have a perfect understanding of the philosophical roots of identity, it is necessary to have a brief review of socially and psychologically oriented theories of this multifaceted term.

In the pool of identities, “social identity” theory was developed by Tajfel & Turner (1986) as a way to explain in-group vs. out-group discrimination. Social identity theory asserts that group membership creates in-group relation at the expense of out-group. In many instances, the members of in-group are biased toward the out-group. According to Tajfel et al (1979) in-group favoritism takes place when people show tendency to a group which is perceived to be sharing values with them, in order to gain positive distinctiveness from others. The sense of hatred and bias that some people carry toward other cultures, languages or nationalities is to some extent the result of in-group and out-group categorization by them.

As Turner (1986) maintains a person has not just one personal self but several selves which lead to widening circles of group memberships including family, social institutes, political circles of group members. These memberships are formulated due to social and contextual factors. As Hall (1992) argues, social identity is the individual self-concept, emanated from perceived membership of social groups.

Personal identity defined within the realm of psychology, refers to the global understanding that a person has of himself irrespective of social roles. Self identity is composed of relatively prominent self assessments, such as personality attributes and awareness of one’s physical attributes. As Ericson (1975) maintains, self identity is not restricted to the present. It encompasses our past selves and present selves. Future selves also represent individual’s attitudes toward what they might become and what they want to become. In sum, Personal identity is the individualistic conception from self, irrespective of the feasible position in social relation network.

Another representation of identity that encompasses individuals and groups is “cultural identity” denoting the association between the individuals or groups and the components of culture incorporating (nationality, language, ethnicity, history, religion, geographical position. Vygotsky (1967) as the founder of socio-cultural theory maintained that culture is a crucial factor in formulating the identity of individuals in the sense that what they learn since their childhood is the outcome of multiple interactions with the older and more experienced people coupled with the cognitive development. Numerous studies indicate that the components of culture (language, ethnicity, religion, history, gender, traditions, and mythology) have indisputable impact on the identity of the people who have been categorized within those broad terms. According to Block (2006) each of these subcomponents formulates separate identities and also predisposes different forms of agency and subjectivity in relation to the individuals’ identity. In this line of research, studies of Sapir and Whorf (1962) showed that language as the subcomponent of culture hugely impacts people’s way of thinking and conceptualizing the world. From the social perspective, Weber (1978) investigated the formation of the capitalist societies and proved that the protestant branch of Christianity led a great part of Europe to capitalist and liberalist states by confirming the role of religion(as another subcomponent of cultural identity).

“Collective identity” as still another type of identity based on Melluci (1995) is a set of individual’s sense of belonging to a group or collective. This collective can be a political party, religious group or other forms of social groups. For the individual, the identity emerged from the collective or group, shapes his or her identity to some extent. According to Melluci (1995) collective identity involves the imaginative leaps of bringing people together with large

numbers of others under one symbolic roof and gives them the possibility of establishing a sense of solidarity with the broader community.

It worth mentioning that the above mentioned categories of identity are adopted in the realm of social and psychological fields. Multitude research has been done to study their relationship with language acquisition (e.g., Duff, 2002; Mackay & Wong 1996, Miller, 2003; Pavlenco, 2007).

While identity is taken into account within a broader perspective, it's the turn for historical and philosophical manifestations of this controversial concept consisting of traditional, modern and postmodern identity. Such categorization has been widely neglected in SLA literature. Each of these three manifestations of identity has had irrefutable impact on many branches of human science, no doubt; linguistic and second language acquisition studies were of no exception.

2. IDENTITY IN PRE-MODERN SOCIETIES (TRADITIONAL SOCIETIES)

Prior to the wave of industrialization and revolution in science, identity of individuals was considered to be fixed, unitary and static in many aspects. Peoples' realization from themselves and others was mostly limited to their ethnicity, language, race, religion and socioeconomic condition. It was almost impossible for individuals to surpass the borders defined for their identity by the dominant cultural norms mostly informed by religious beliefs. For instance, during feudalism, social identities were pre-determined, in such a way that the son of a peasant had no opportunity to become an aristocrat, or it was a stark danger for a person to change his religion (facing death punishment for heresy). Habermass (1971) maintained that traditional cultures are representational, since one party seeks to represent itself on audience by overwhelming its subjects through the use of sheer force and ideology. In traditional societies, social dynamism was a rare phenomenon; due to the traditional norms and values which inflicted upon the people in that context. Most dominant and prevailing values and morals in such societies as Marx (1859) maintained are deeply embedded in the metaphysical basis (unfeasibility of being criticized in their time).

It is evident that in such societies, fanatic ideas, determinism and conservatism are inseparable components, hindering learning new things even new language, if they are not in conformity with the dominant cultural and ideological agenda of that socio-cultural context.

3. TRADITIONAL IDENTITY AND THE THEORIES OF LANGUAGE ACQUISITIONS

Many characteristics of grammar translation method which was widely adopted from ancient Greece and Rome until the eighteenth century for teaching language were indicative of the trends of this realm of history. In this method, there was no scientific basis for the nature of language and the learning language itself because in those days science was to a great extent overshadowed by purely metaphysical or mythological interpretations. (Language supposed to be a god gifted phenomenon, no human intervention). To speculate from a broader perspective, learning language was not the matter of promotion in social position or intercultural relationship due to the static nature of traditional societies. In such societies as Durkheim (1893) implied the valued moral principles and social norms were robust enough to block the adoption of alien cultures deliberately. In this case, learning another language was mostly used as a tool for the dissemination of religious beliefs or in limited cases as Richards et al (1986) maintained, for solidifying the intellectual power of mind for philosophical purposes or limited relation among the elites of different societies. It goes without saying that in such a static texture of society, the type of valued identity is not in conformity with learning a new language as a general orientation in society. With respect to the aforementioned norms (pervasiveness of metaphysical paradigm), scientific definition of language phenomena and standard ways of teaching it were

On the Necessity of the Ontological Analysis of identity Formation and Its linkage to the Language Acquisition Theories

mostly disregarded as trivial issues and haphazard scientific endeavors for language analysis were impotent and fruitless.

4. MODERN IDENTITY

Subsequent to the collapse and disintegration of the cultural texture of traditional societies as a result of the rationality hegemony rooted in the reflections of the Enlightenment philosophers as Kant, 1758 (transcendental rationality), Hegel, 1857 (dialectical logic), Descartes(1637) (autonomous reason), Leibnitz (Concept of Monadology), the traditional values of this historical era were blurred or discounted as futile and unprincipled. In this age, human was no more realized as the sufferer of his original sin or as a subdued entity by the fierce and uncontrollable forces of nature. The type and nature of the hegemony that once governed traditional societies, was harshly criticized by proponents of great social change under the influence of evolutionary biology of Darwin (1872) and Spenser's (1891) attitude toward the evolutionary stages of societies from barbaric to modern societies. As the result of the efforts made by enlightenment scholars, through their new description from human identity, the closed and conservative system of the traditional societies was opened to new people, cultures and nations. In that time, novel definitions of human identity were introduced and theorized by inaugurated scholars. Humanism became the dominant agenda in academic and social settings. The nature of human was identified by power of reason and logic. Modernity thinkers believed that by the help of reason, along with experiment, access to utopist life, with no doubt would be feasible. People's identity was no more based on religious and mere socioeconomic position.

Modernity philosophers were entranced by essentialism which regarded the human nature as fixed, irrespective of historical, social and cultural factors. Modern philosophers contended that there is a universal essence of rationality in human beings as their core component. These scholars withheld that by recourse to logic and experience, individuals may achieve the desired resources to reach prosperity, which is ontologically and epistemologically different from those underscored in religious and traditional concept (as metaphysical essence). To date, numerous modern philosophers have made serious attempts to probe different conceptualizations from identity.

Deleuz (1973) perceived identity as a rational power that had the authority and authenticity to interrogate the previous values and norms. It can govern the construction of cultural and national homogeneity. This account also deems identity as a fixed set of characteristics that attach themselves to the persona of an individual and remain there with her, although they may undergo some mild sorts of modifications throughout human life. Consequently, modernist account of identity tends to focus mostly on clearly-cut boundaries among social and psychological constructs concerning modernity.

Another factor which flourished modernity movement was the emergence of empiricist school witnessing exponential growth by the inspiring theories of Comte (1865) (social positivism), David Hume (1734), (critiquing causality), Roger Bacon, (1254), (attacking Aristotelian logic) as empiricist philosophers along with Descartes and Spinoza (1660) in rational philosophy. They proclaimed that the paradigm of modernity rests profoundly on the idea of universal reason and social progress that are attainable through advances in knowledge and experiment, called by Lyotard (1984) the French philosopher, as master narratives.

Giddiness (2004) argued that in modernity human beings can define themselves through their own inner resources and create their own visional existence. In his conceptualization, identity is incessantly constructed and changes due to the elimination of the time and space factors in the modern world. Baudelaire (1976) implied that in modernity there are many

binaries as civilized, uncivilized, male vs. female. In the same way, cultures can be categorized as high and low. Cultures which benefit from rationality, critical thinking, experience and logic are high (in terms of quality) cultures, while those adhered to traditional, local and metaphysical values are the possessors of low culture.

In parallel with the consistent weakening of the traditional and religious based values, Modernity scholars depicted the nature of human identity as an entity endowed with such a rational and analytic power that has the undeniable authenticity to reveal all the secrets of universe and humanity as the time passes by. They maintained that by contemplation, logic and constant experiments, as crucial epistemological tool, man can reach freedom and prosperity. In their opinion, the path of societies is evolutionary and conducive to redemption if these tools are adopted, but this redemption is in stark conflict with the religious redemption in the sense that in many cases it is not related to the life after death. Modernity scholars also gave credit to humanism, civil rights and liberalism. They considered human as the center of creation, who must find the ethical touchstones based on ration and experience. Habermas (1971) categorized the crucial specifications of modernity concisely; he argued that the modernity movement should include these characteristics: industrialization, urbanization, raising the importance of science, secularization, surveillance, individualization, religious pluralism, capitalism, rationalization.

It is tangible that the first eight defining characteristics are the logical consequence of the rationalization. Rationality in economics will result in capitalism and if it is geared to science it would be conducive to urbanization, industrialization, and finally the use of logic and reason in culture and religion will lead to predominance of secularism and pluralism and individualism in social agendas. Weedon (1987) summarized other aspects of modernity to better elucidate this term. She indicates that modernist's faith in grand theories can explain issues related to history, culture and science by knowledge. She adds that the sense of unified centered self at the side of individualism and a unified conception from identity is another component of modernity. Adorno (1993) also maintains that faith in the real beyond media and representation and authenticity of originals and centralized knowledge are inseparable ingredients of modernity thinkers.

5. MODERNITY DEFINITION OF IDENTITY AND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

The modernity paradigm, with the slogan of the centrality of ration, was highly influential on the language studies and second language acquisition theories. Saussure's (1966) studies on language, inspired by modernity orientation toward the rational identity of human, treated language as a rule based and rational system. These rules included relationship between the inherent self-organizing specifications in language called syntagmatic and paradigmatic relations. He also put forward the notions of signifier and signified and the arbitrary relationship between these two aspects in semantic analysis. According to Saussure (1966) the distinction between speech (*parole*) and language (*langue*) was an attempt to provide a way of recognizing that, despite geographical, interpersonal and social variations, language has shared patterns and structures. He implied that there is no structural role for the dynamism and multiplicity of human identity as a superstructure for defining the nature of language. The rigid stance of Saussure toward the nature of language and its systematicity was the result of his belief in the unlimited power of human in understanding the most complicated phenomena such as *langue* (optimism in modernity toward human identity)

These scientific orientations toward language influenced by modernity continued to behaviorism so swiftly and rigorously that Skinner (1957) regarded learning of a language as a verbal behavior accomplished during the process of operant conditioning. Drawing on this delineation of learning, he ignored many aspects of human identity such as its being context-embedded, multifaceted and unpredictable. The tenets of the behaviorist approach toward

On the Necessity of the Ontological Analysis of identity Formation and Its linkage to the Language Acquisition Theories

language teaching and learning were originated from the empiricist school of thought which was an inseparable and chief component of modernity wave. The results of which were viewed in audio-lingual, direct method and total physical response method (viewing learning as habit formation). The proponents of this line of thinking also disregarded multiple dimensions of human identity (emotions, complex mental processing and localities).

With the introduction of generative grammar, there was a shift from the external environment to the minds of learners for unraveling the nature of language. (Ignoring some aspects of identity as emotions). Chomsky (1957) implied that the behaviorist account of learning and language is not logical and satisfactory; he called this deficient argument as the poverty of stimulus. In his conceptualization, the main syntactic foundations (deep and surface structure, X-bar theory, subadjacency principle, binding and bounding theories, are traced in the mind of learners called “universal grammar”. As Atkinson (2002) maintained, Chomsky’s greatest impact, came with his radical amputation of cognition from behaviorism by introducing the famous competence –performance distinction. Chomsky argued that generated language was so contaminated by human frailties that language as a system became unavailable for scientific study. By this he relocated the study of linguistics in the head and made a powerful case for scientific reductionism.

Moreover, Generative grammar was built upon the rationalistic and deductive epistemology which was the touch stone of modernity movement. He as well as the modernity proponents claimed that the secrets of language could be revealed by incorporating the principals of generative grammar. As modernity thinkers reduced the core of human identity to rationality and experiment, ignoring feelings, emotions, and socio-cultural factors in language learning, the generative grammarian did the same to language by disregarding social and contextual factors which could affect the understanding and production of first or a second language. In other words, reductionism and optimism were two infallible notions in the mind of the scholars stricken by modernity waves.

Rationalist’s rigid adherence to the rational and logical essence of humanity gave birth to the cognitivists’ theories of SLA. Pieneman (1988) claimed that “processability theory” can define many aspects of SLA. He argued that brain has a linguistic processor with innate constraints that are contingent upon the nature of grammatical features of the linguistic input, and limitations on the processing capacity of the mind. He claimed that his theory can predict the subsequent stages of language acquisition. This theory aims to clarify how learners adopt the computational mechanisms that operate on the linguistic knowledge the learners construct. It is explicit and outspoken that contextual factors such as interlocutors, socio-political background of the learners with multilayered identities have been totally disregarded as trivial issues in this theory. Pieneman (1988), as well as the other cognitivists maintained that mind is almost everything (Descartes legacy) for SLA and extra -linguistic factors along with other elements are periphery in learning a new language.

Furthermore, Krashen’s (1985) input hypothesis pursued the path of cognitive theorists from a different outlook. He confirmed that individuals acquire language by receiving and understanding comprehensible input. He proposed that “intake” (the comprehended input) and the psychologically based affective factors alone were both necessary and sufficient for SLA. The input hypothesis asserts that learners become more proficient in second language when the lexical and grammatical structures are slightly beyond their current proficiency levels in the form of $i+1$. It is tangible that in this theory all significant factors for language acquisition involve brain, linguistic input and the psychologically based affective factors. He discarded the significance of cultural and social dimensions of learner’s subjectivities and agency in relation to the wider social and cultural aspects. In the proposed model, there was no hint to the socio-

political situation under which the learners have been exposed to. For Krashen, learners from any culture and any parts of the world show similar or the same trajectory in learning the second language. Although he put forward the concept of “affective filter”, it was a psychological and binary term that even couldn’t touch the complex socio-cultural and contextual factors having huge impact on the learners’ performance. The reason for this utter ignorance was that Krashen didn’t take the multifaceted, fluid and contradictory identity of the learner into account and focused on just one aspect (cognitive) of the learners’ identity in his so called “input” theory.

The rushing waves of modernity also revolutionized the methodology of second language by generating a host of innovative methods. Throughout the twentieth century, the terminology of language teaching methods appeared in educational literature as a distinguished field of study. The founders of each of these methods (audio-lingual method, Direct method, community language learning, etc) claimed that their proposed method was the best and most comprehensive for teaching and learning a new language. This claim was reminder of the claims of modernity thinkers about the power and precision of human knowledge.

Many scholars (Krashen, 1985; Atkinson, 1991, Rumelheart, 1973 to name a few) made serious endeavors to analyze language and language teaching scientifically to present the best method among them, irrespective of the fact that a voluminous part of language is constructed interactionally through social and personal discursive functions which are inherently complicated and multidimensional. In conformity with modernists’ view of identity as a fixed and unitary entity, as Stern (1985) maintained, they neglected scores of social, individual and cultural characteristics of the context along with learners’ and teachers’ identities in other parts of the world. They showed lack of concern to localities, regional values and so forth. The crisis modernity theorists encountered can be deemed as similar to the experience of the founders of method era, which ultimately led to the announcement of the death of method by Allwright (1991) as a reminiscent of Barthes’ (1972) announcement of the death of author. This was the beginning of a new era entitled as post-method era for ELT theorists and practitioners.

6. POSTMODERN IDENTITY AND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

Lyotard (1984), the French philosopher was among the first scholars to theoretically criticize the dominant stalwarts of modernity in his book “Postmodern Condition”. He maintained that the two lethal world wars, destruction of human environment, mass killing of Jews by Nazis and the widening gap between the poor and rich, has emerged from the totalitarian slogans of modernity movement. He announced the death of the master-narratives (the centrality of human rational power). In his conceptualization, reason is not the infallible characteristic of human with the authority to solve all of our problems. He believed that the idea of universal rationality is a stark illusion.

Among the postmodern philosophers, Foucault (1994) fiercely interrogated the rationalists’ and empiricists’ account of the reality and the nature of truth and human identity. He strived to alert that modernity faith in pure and universal subjectivity, which was Descartes’ (1578) inheritance, is not real and authentic in essence. He maintained that human identity is the result of the complex interrelationship between asymmetric power relations and historical, social and cultural events. Science, recognized as the touchstone of modernity is itself constituted of the discourse of power, formulated as discursively oriented discipline with highly specific terms to dominate the rest and put them under surveillance and interrogation.

Fredrick Nietzsche has been pinpointed as the most imperative precursors of post modernity who coined the controversial term “perspectivism” in philosophy. This term was in utter contradiction with the modernity movement claims about “objective metaphysics (Scientism)”. Nietzsche argued that no evaluations of objectivity can transcend cultural formulations or

On the Necessity of the Ontological Analysis of identity Formation and Its linkage to the Language Acquisition Theories

subjective designation. He maintained that there are no objective facts and there is no ethical or epistemological truth outside to be searched.

Bourdieu (1977) was another postmodern intellectual whose revolutionary attitudes gave birth and vitality to the new definitions of identity. He was hugely inspired by the works of philosophers including Niche, Heidegger, and Foucault as the precursors' of post-structuralism movement. He introduced the notorious terms: "Hyper-reality" and "world of simulation" and furthered the border of postmodern sociology and philosophy. In his opinion, identity in post-industrial era is shaped and manipulated by Media consisting of internet, TV, newspapers, etc. Such multimedia-based culture represent us an imaginary world not the real and authentic one. That's why he argues that postmodern world is in the state of ontological uncertainty. It must be noted that identity in post-modernity is not cohesive, unitary and static as it was assumed in modernity. For a post-modern advocate, every resource can be adopted for solving a problem and answering a question. Customs, traditions, religions, etc, may have desirable use and benefits to offer. Hence, post-modernity is built upon philosophical relativism. In the same line, Post-structuralist approaches to theorizing identity have also been notoriously adopted by cultural theorist Hall (1992) and post colonial theorist Bhabha (1994) to de-construct identity categories such as race and ethnicity. In theorizing cultural identity, hall confirmed on identity as in process and stressed the significance of representation following from the discourse construction from identity. In his notion of new 'identities' Hall provided an alternative theorizing of race that recognizing experience of race without homogenizing them. According to Marcuse (1941) the touchstones of post-modernity thinking orientation and identity description can be summarized in five categories 1) rejection of totalizing theories along with seeking for localizing and contingent theories. 2) social and cultural pluralism, disunity and unclear base for social, national and ethnic unity 3) sense of fragmentation and de-centered self, multiple conflicting identities 4) Trust and investment in micro politics, identity politics, local politics and institutional power 5) indeterminacy, play, irony and challenge to official seriousness, together with subversion of earnestness 6) confirmation of the feminist movement, human rights, safe environment and sociopolitical liberation aspirations.

Post modernists' faith in identities not identity is better delineated in the individuals' positioning and context. As Norton (1995) implied, in the pool of various positions and multiple contexts, it is feasible for a person to adopt multitudes of identities highly contingent on the surrounding socio-cultural context in a situated activity. Bourdieu (1984) indicated that power relation in any discursive activity is a determining factor for the adoption of identities in a social setting which is highly divergent, multilayered, due to this power relation in discourse community. Since post modernity as a philosophy is committed to the blurring of all sorts of boundaries as Giddens (2004) held, the notion of postmodern identity conjures up rigid boundaries and respects for difference and plurality of identities. The sameness of modern identity has transformed into postmodern identities, which are no more able to understand the universe which has surrounded them.

7. POSTMODERN IDENTITY AND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION THEORIES

Post-modernity phenomenon immensely contributed to language studies and teaching. The conceptualizations of postmodern intellectuals toward identity widely affected the description of the nature of language and the ways for teaching and learning it. In essence, post-struturalists (as an inseparable consequence of post modernity movement) viewed language as an exceedingly complex system which can't be analyzed into components irrespective of the context and the identity of the interlocutors in which it is generated. Post-structuralists maintained that in any uttered sentence or piece of discourse, there are multitudes of linguistic and extra linguistic variables affecting it; consequently it is impossible to identify and track all

these intertwining elements which incorporate social, cultural, historical and psychological dimensions in generating language (despite the claims of structuralists and rationalists). This conceptualization from the use and the nature of language is in conformity with postmodernists' delineation of human identity which cannot be considered as fixed and unitary but exposed to constant change due to a host of factors.

By the same token, Bourdieu (1977) influenced by postmodern philosophers maintained that despite saussors' (1966) interpretation regarding the self-organizing nature of language, languages can't be probed separately from its speakers and context, but it is directly linked to the concept of power. Power is a core and critical issue, since in any discursive interaction, interlocutors seldom share equal speaking rights. Some have more opportunity to speak and use language as a "cultural capital" while others' choices are more limited due to a wide range of variables. For Bourdieu, using language was a social and political practice in which an utterance' value and meaning was determined to some extent, by the value and meaning ascribed to person who speaks. On the other hand, the ascribed value of a person or group can vary depending on the situation or context. He saw linguistic discourse as a symbolic asset which can receive different values depending on the market on which it is proposed. He argued that dominant usage is associated with dominant class. He also introduced the concepts of "legitimate" and "illegitimate" speakers in relation to their authority to talk and receive answers. Based on Bourdieu (1997) study, since the nature of power is dynamic and transformative, the language produced has the same representation. Henceforth, it is impossible to decode the nature of language once for all the time (despite the claims of rationalists). Based on Bourdieu the second language teacher should be aware of the unequal distribution of power among his students and try to establish equal opportunities for their engagement in the language practices.

One of the pivotal scholars whose seminal works in the field of philosophy and literary criticism associated to postmodern movement was Bakhtin. For Bakhtin (1981) language is not a set of idealized forms independent of the identity of its speakers or the speaking practice, but rather a situated utterance in which speakers in dialogue with others try to create meaning. According to Bakhtin (1984) language has no independent existence outside of its use, and that functional use is definitely a social one. He used the metaphor of speech communication as a chain, a constant interaction through conversation that new speakers (e.g. children or the new comers) strive to join. While structural theorists might see language learning as a gradual individual process of internalizing a set of rules, structures and vocabulary of standard language manifested in audio-lingual, total physical response and direct methods of teaching language, Bakhtin conceived of language learning as the process of constant efforts to use language in order to participate in specific speech communities. Using language meant using tool others had used before, and he saw speakers as having multiple and dynamic identities empowered by the ability to employ language to express their own meanings. Further he pointed out how social positions outside language might affect any individual's speaking advantages. Therefore, using language is a social and political practice in which an utterance's value is determined to some extent by the value and meaning ascribed to the person who speaks.

Another representation of post-structuralists' and postmodern thinking toward identity, could be perceived in second language teaching methods. Post-method pedagogy was rooted in the doubt toward master-narratives (their prescriptive nature) of language teaching methods which was theoretically similar to Lyotars' (1984) criticism from modernity. Post-modernity dubious outlook toward positivistic and prescriptive nature of human knowledge, inspired many SLA scholars to set the stage for a dramatic shift from method to post method pedagogy. Crandell (2000) held that the positivist oriented perspective about methods transformed to poststructuralists and constructivists' oriented ones due to the changes in the definition of identity. Post-modernity belief in multiple and dynamic nature of human identity provided theoretical justifications for the rigid foundation of post method. According to the proponents

On the Necessity of the Ontological Analysis of identity Formation and Its linkage to the Language Acquisition Theories

of post method pedagogy, neither learners nor teachers are the mere slaves of prescriptivist and the so-called scientific methods.

As Brown (2000) implied, post-method pedagogy set the stage for a democratic language teaching profession because it assigns a voice to the teachers and students and respects the type of knowledge they possess while prior to post- method era, they were considered as the passive recipients of theorists prescriptions. Post- method pedagogy followed the principals of post modernity and its conceptualizations from identity by giving more autonomy and confidence to teachers and students through focusing on the differences (Akbari2005). Pencycock (1998) argued that methods refer to interested knowledge acting as a quasi-political or mercenary agenda of their proponents by ignoring the multiple and contradictory essence of the learners identity and become a vehicle for linguistic imperialism.

According to the followers of post method pedagogy, methods downplayed the particularity of situational context, diversity of sociopolitical conditions, dynamic and multifaceted nature of teachers' and learners' identity by adhering to the principals of positivism and rationalism. (Kumarivadivelu, 2001). If the underlying principals of the philosophy of methods are traced, it can be shown that they are formulated in conformity with modernity slogans claiming the centrality of scientific, rationalistic and generalizable solutions to the problems as the ideal and ultimate resort. In accordance with this attitude there are ideal and all-embracing methods for teaching language across time and space and language learning route is the same for all despite the contextual, interpersonal variables. As rationalists' proponents of methods believe in the fixed identity of learners, they mostly ignore the particularity of the context and identity by claiming that methods are not context- dependent. Consequently, post-method era can be called as a revolutionary movement against the totalitarian slogans of methods.

Another current theory of SLA inspired by post- modernity definition of identity is chaos-complexity theory suggested by Larsen-Freeman (1997). The unpredictability and contradiction in post-modernists' realization from the nature of identity also played significant role in the enrichment of the theories of SLA. Unlike some traditional and scientific approaches that analyze systems in isolation, chaos-complexity theory regards language as the synthesis of emerging wholes of their individual components. Regarding this theory, many interactions among the components of the language and context are unpredictable and it is through these interactions that the language emerges. In many cases, the number and ways of such interactions and their outcomes are so numerous and complicated that it is unfeasible to predict the how of language generation. Larsen-Freeman (1997) maintained that the dynamism of SLA is seen in the ever changing character of learner's internal grammar. This system is adaptive because it changes to fit the new circumstances, which are also themselves continually changing.

Scores of the underlying assumptions of this theory are attributable to the concept of disorganized complexity introduced by Weaver (1948) through which he signaled that there is no possibility for a generalized and comprehensive theory for complex systems due to their adaptive, situational and multivariate nature. The idea behind this theory reminds us of the relativism which was the foundation of postmodern epistemology toward knowledge and identity. This relativity had also roots in quantum mechanics, when Heisenberg (1949) proved that unlike the claims of the proponents of Newtonian physics, the position and velocity of atoms could not be observed simultaneously. This was a serious blow to the empiricists and rationalists who believed firmly in the predictive power of rationality and empiricism. Hence unlike traditional scientific approaches which analyze systems into their components and study them in isolation, Chaos theory proponents assume that language acquisition is constantly emerging from unpredictable interactions among different components that occur between the learner (with multiple and contradictory identity) and environment.

In the realm of SLA, many aspects of Vygotsky's (1967) socio-cultural theory are resorted to postmodernists' definition of identity. Vygotsky was inspired by Marx's realization from dialectical logic, structures and superstructures. It is essential to note that postmodernists' definitions of identity are amply reflected in socio-cultural theory since both share commonalities in the sense that they reject the essentialists' realization from human identity. Consequently, teaching methods built upon socio-cultural theories of SLA repudiate the cognitive uni-dimensional stance toward the central role of mind and cognition per se in learning the second language. Cognitive theorists' profound faith in the rational identity of human led them to the idea that the learning of second language is a uniform and homogeneous process among all learners because processing (organizing, retrieving, restructuring,) of knowledge is identical for every individual. On the other hand, Vygotsky (1967) inspired by relativistic philosophers confirmed that all learning takes place in the real context of life and in interaction between self, environment and others through the mediation of symbolic cultural artifacts. He implied that everything we learn doesn't follow similar trajectories for everyone. Lentolf (2006) argued that learning a language is not just the memorization of the rules, mental representations and processing mechanisms, rather, language learning is inextricably intertwined with the context, experienced adults and social and historical background of the learners. Since human identity is not unitary, language acquisition does not follow the same trajectory either. For this reason, Lentolf (2000) maintained that socio-cultural theory puts mediation either by self or other, at the core of development and use. He underscored that all human psychological processes including higher order mental processes (self regulation, concept regulation, selective attention) are mediated by social and psychological tools such as language, signs, and symbols which are not formed in vacuum and are socially and culturally embedded. Wertsch (1998) contends that language serves as a symbolic artifact to facilitate activities, but it is in and through these activities that language is appropriated. He went on to say that language learning, takes place within the zone of proximal development. According to Lave and Wenger (cited in Norton, 1995) learning language involves the social interaction between the learners as new-comers and teachers as the old timers within the specific time and space which is highly unpredictable the same as human identity.

8. RESEARCH ON IDENTITY AND SLA

Norton- Pierce (1995) put forward the construct of 'identity investment' in second language acquisition in her landmark article, in which she argued that most of the previous studies directed toward SLA were psychologically or culturally- based while the multiple and contradictory identity of learners (as a social construct) has been downplayed by them. These theorists simply considered learners in binary terms as motivated - unmotivated introverted - extroverted. Norton (1997), inspired by postmodern thinkers, implied that identity is not unitary and fixed, it is multiple and even in some cases contradictory, depending on the contextual factors. Consequently, a language learner who has difficulty in one context (e.g. classroom environment) or social (as a student) may perform better in other one (e.g. private conversation). In the same venue, Anderson (1991) coined the term "imagined communities", by the help of which Kano & Norton (2003) meant that in many cases foreign language learners imagine themselves in communication with the people they haven't visited. Research inspired by modern and postmodern philosophers took into account the relation before by the construction of the new identity for themselves. Through which they develop their desired new identity (by imagination) helping them to improve their positioning and agency in language acquisition (By attaining self confidence). Other scholars as Heller (2007) took the position that, it is through language that a person negotiates his identity within and across different sites at different points in time and it is through language that a person gains access to powerful social networks that give learners the opportunity to speak. Insights from West (1992), Bourdieu (1997) and Commins (2000) were particularly helpful in conceptualizing the relationship between power, identity and language learning. Bourdieu (1997) contended that the value given

On the Necessity of the Ontological Analysis of identity Formation and Its linkage to the Language Acquisition Theories

to speech cannot be understood apart from the identity of the person who speaks it, and this identity cannot be realized irrespective of the larger networks of social relations. Cummins (2006) made a remarkable contribution to an understanding of the relationship between identity, power and language learning. He argued that the relation of power can serve to enable or constrain the range of identities that language learners can negotiate in their classrooms and communities. With the emerging mass publication on identity (i. e. Duff, 2002; Mackay & Wong 1996, Miller, 2003; Pavlenko, 2007). This line of research has gained momentum since the last two decades. Multitudes aspects of identity were studied in relation to the acquisition of language. Factors involving ethnicity, nationality, gender and socio-economic condition, were probed concerning L2 language acquisition. In the same line, Mackay and Wong (1996) studied how the specific needs, desires and negotiation of the learners determine their investment in the four skills of language. This study showed that one of the participants whose speaking skill greatly improved over other skills was due to his sociable character which made it possible for him as a Chinese boy to find many native language friends and interact with them in this way resist being positioned as a foreigner by being accepted by his target language friends. Honda (2005) has drawn on the construct of investment to understand the engagement of two university students in a Japanese literacy course, concluding that their multiple memberships in diverse communities may have shaped the way they invested differently in writing in Japanese. While one of them became proficient in official writing due to identification with the well-known Japanese poets while the other showed no signs of improvement because of her lack of identification with the target culture. Studying identity from a broader perspective, Norton (2001) adopted the construct of imagined community to explain the non- participation of two adult immigrant learners in their language classes. She concluded that the identities learner take in their imagination toward the target community is of immense significance in language learning. In the same venue, Elaine Chun (2001) study on Korean American men's identity and language learning indicated that unlike African Americans, most Asian Americans do not have access to a variety of English used with ethnicity specific meaning. She argued that for this reason some of the Asian American men in her study drawing on elements of African American vernacular in order to locate themselves against racial ideologies that privilege whiteness. Another Study conducted by Shirk and Pavlenko (2004) demonstrated that English learners experience significantly identity conflicts between the L1 and L2 culture when speaking English. To broaden the scope of multidimensional identity, Norton (1997) investigated the case of Mai a Vietnamese immigrant who made a lot of sacrifices (despite economic problems) to take part in ESL classes but despite being highly motivated to learn English she was frustrated sitting in class for the whole session and listen to students talking about the culture of their country. Norton (1997) argued that the lack of involvement by Mai might be due to the teachers' failure to acknowledge the learners' identities as immigrants in the new country and thus their language needs therefore suggests that the teachers' failure to acknowledge the immigrant identity of the learner is the reason for the lack of Mai involvement in the class. Along with the principals of post structuralism, Bashi- Alis' (2006) study slightly shed different insights on L2 identities. Instead of maintaining her L1 identity, Maria went to great length concealing her ethnic identity in the school. She did so by adopting the common linguistic and social traits shared by the dominant African- American social group in the school context. Her eagerness to gain entry into dominant group led her to resist learning standard American English despite its usefulness for her future academic success. Cangajaras (1993) probed US published ESL text-books used in Sri Lankan classroom that underlined the importance of the text books to language learner identity construction. His study revealed that the dialogues of interlocutors in the text books portray racial and gender bias, as well as western middle class values like consumerism, thrift and social mobility. Students, in reaction to the text books adopted a range of reactions including hostility, mockery, and ignorance.

9. CONCLUSION

The aim of this paper was to shed light on the underlying philosophical reflections that brought about changes in defining identity. It also tried to illuminate how philosophical characterization of identity had huge impact on the theories of the first and second language acquisition. The research indicated that it is not feasible to have a vivid and all-inclusive realization from the teaching methodology and SLA theories without resorting to the philosophical roots of this complicated notion. It also indicated that Modern philosopher's faith in essentialism led them to define identity as a fixed, unitary and static notion. They believed that rationality is the core characteristic of human identity by calling other aspects of identity as periphery and unimportant. This line of thought greatly influenced theorists from all scientific disciplines and the field of second language acquisition was no exception. Consequently, it gave birth to many theories of language acquisition such as behaviorist theories (audio-lingual method, situational teaching, total physical response, etc) and cognitive theories (universal grammar, input hypothesis, statistical and probabilistic theories of SLA). The ideas shared among all these theories were their firm belief in the slogan that there is always a best method to teach the language and a best theory to explain the complicated nature of language. In contrast to this conception, post modern philosophers' definition of identity while rejecting essentialism, assumed that identity is dynamic, multilayered and even contradictory across time and space. Hence, there is no ultimate and all embracing method for teaching the language and theorizing about it. This approach to identity contributed to the appearance of post method pedagogy, socio-cultural theory, socio-cognitive theory, complexity theory and a host of other theories for learning a second language through questioning the touch-stones of the previous approaches and methods. Analysis of postmodern identity toward SLA also suggested that language learning is not just a gradual process of internalizing a set of rules of the standard language. Rather, these theoretical principals suggest that second language learners' identity is multiple and their learning efficiency in each of these multiple positions is highly diverse. It is a burden on the shoulder of ELT practitioners to realize this multiplicity of dynamism and act in conformity with these complicated notions to enhance the efficiency of language learning.

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On the Necessity of the Ontological Analysis of identity Formation and Its linkage to the
Language Acquisition Theories

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