Hegemonic Sway of English—Learning the Language at SUST

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Abstract

Hegemony is embodied with cultural domination. For analytical purposes present researchers used hegemonic forces i.e. money economy forces, human capital forces, and social forces to analyze motivations for learning English of SUST students. Consequently, among all forces human capital force and social force are prevailing predominantly among SUST students. Researchers used the concept of instrumental and integrative motivational orientations to learn language for bilingualism. The study reveals that students of SUST learn English for both types of motivations but integrative motivation is more dominating over the second. A 10-item survey was administered to 103 students who are non-English majors. With an average age of 21, these 103 participants are 4th year 2nd semester students of Economics, Public Administration and Sociology of SUST. Data were analyzed by SPSS Program.

Key-Words: Hegemony, Integrative and Instrumental Motivation, Learning English

Introduction

There is a great deal of post-modernist paradoxes regarding the discourse on power of language and the language of power. The present research article is not dealing with this dilemma but has drawn the inertia of hegemony that lies between these two titanic discourses. As Bourdieu emphasized on the symbolic power of language which helps individuals to build human capital for them, so the rhetoric implication and application of that power might increase the great potentials for them within society [3]. Languages live in peaceful co-existence and they reach out to other languages or retract at will. This would be to overlook the fact that some languages acquire hegemony in the domain of market economy, civil society and other public spheres but some languages do not simply because the former constitute as well as get constituted by different forms of modalities of power. They are, therefore, in a position to either subdue or to ignore other languages. These multiple functions of languages create hegemony for a single language and turn other languages as subaltern. In order to understand other languages, individuals need some prior understanding of the social practices of the community.

English is spoken natively by about 400 million people and learned as a second language (L2) by perhaps twice that number. While these two figures added together still amount to less than the number of speakers of Chinese, the pre-eminent position of English in world affairs is owed to its global geographical spread and its prominence as a language of wider communication. Besides, being the national language of the several important countries, for most of the twenty first century English has enjoyed a privileged status as the recognized world language of science, business, and diplomacy and is widely used in any sphere where a default language must be chosen such as multinational conferences, air traffic control, and the administration of international organizations like the United Nations. English is the unquestioned lingua franca of the worldwide computer culture [11]. In Bangladesh, the role of English is purely functional. English has been used for years and for different academic and business purposes and gradually it is evolved to be a part of the socio-cultural system. Since birth as an independent country, Bangladesh has witnessed and over-whelming importance of “Bangla everywhere” [17], which inevitably affected and limited the use of English nearly in all public domains. The government of Bangladesh declared Bangla as the
official language in 1971 and passed laws and orders to use Bengali/Bangla at all levels. The constitution was written in Bangla. The constitution states: “The state language of the Republic is Bengali” (Part 1; Article 3) and “The state shall adopt measures to conserve the cultural heritage of the people, and so to foster and improve the national language, literature and the arts that all sections of the people...participate” (Part 11; section 23) [1]. As a result, English as a language had a setback and suffered tremendously, leaving a vacuum which is yet to be filled.

Concepts and Definitions

Motivation

Motivation is what moves us to act and in this context to learn English [18]. This deceptively simple statement reveals, however, the four elements it involves: firstly, the reasons why we want to learn; secondly, the strength of our desire to learn; thirdly, the kind of person we are; and finally, the task, and our estimation of what it requires of us. Gardner and Lambert define “motivation” in terms of the L2 learners’ overall goal or orientation [7]. Brown identifies three types of motivation: 1) global motivation, which consists of a general orientation to the goal of learning a L2; 2); situational motivation, which varies according to the situation in which learning takes place (the motivation associated with classroom learning is distinct from the motivation involved in naturalistic learning); 3) task motivation, which is the motivation for performing particular learning tasks [7].

Where “motivation” is concerned, Gardner and Lambert draw a basic distinction between an integrative and instrumental orientation to L2 learning [7]. The former occurs when the learner wishes to identify with the culture of the L2 group. This type of motivation is an extension of Mowrer’s account of motivation in first language learning [22]. Mowrer argues that the child associates the language he hears with the satisfaction provided by the parents’ presence. Thus, just as the child seeks to identify with his/her parents by learning their language, so the L2 learner may be motivated to identify with the L2 speech community by learning its language. Later Gardner linked an integrative motivation to “additive bilingualism.” That is, learners with an integrative motivation are seen as likely to maintain their mother tongue when they learn an L2. Instrumental motivation occurs when the learner’s goals for learning the L2 are functional. For instance, learning directed at passing an examination, furthering career opportunities, or facilitating study of other subjects through the medium of the L2 are all examples of instrumentally motivated learning. Gardner proposes that instrumental motivation is more likely to be linked to “subtractive bilingualism,” where the learner either loses his/her mother tongue or fails to develop the ability to express certain kinds of functions in it.

Integrative Motivation

Motivation has been identified as the learners’ orientation with regard to the goal of learning a second language [5]. It is thought that students who are most successful when learning a target language are those who like the people that speak the language, admire the culture, and have a desire to become familiar with or even integrate into the society in which the language is used [9]. This form of motivation is known as integrative motivation. When someone becomes a resident in a new community that uses the target language in its social interactions, integrative motivation is a key component in assisting the learner to develop some level of proficiency in the language. It becomes a necessity, in order to operate socially in the community and become one of its members. It is also theorized that “integrative motivation typically underlies successful acquisition of a wide range of registers and a native like pronunciation” [16].

Instrumental Motivation

According to Hudson, instrumental motivation is generally characterized by the desire to obtain something practical or concrete from the study of a second language. With instrumental motivation the purpose of language acquisition is more utilitarian, such as meeting the requirements for school or university graduation, applying for a job, requesting higher pay based on language ability, reading technical material, translation work or achieving higher social status. Instrumental motivation is often characteristic of second language acquisition, where little or no social integration of the learner into a community using the target language takes place, or in some instances is even desired [16].

Motivation is an important factor in L2 achievement. For this reason it is important to identify both the type and combination of motivation that assists in the successful acquisition of a second language. At the same time it is necessary to view motivation as one of the number of variables in an intricate model of interrelated individual and situational factors which are unique to each language learner.
Motivation of the Students of Bangladesh:

In order to examine language learning of students at SUST it is needed to explore few factors which characterized the conducted English language exams in the country. One of the eminent factors is the “structure of university entrance exams” and getting a good score in public exams. Due to the way these exams are structured, educational institutes and teachers are forced to educate students in a manner which will prove most useful to them. These exams are a rigorous test of extensive vocabulary and traditional grammatical structures. Needless to mention, the focus of the exams is not directed towards the speaking and listening skills. Educational institutions do not see any kind of need to prepare students for something which will not be examined. Also students think that the principal reason for studying English is a necessity for passing the threshold of examinations. But students of SUST have the acumen to learn English language for integrative reasons which has been revealed in this study i.e. they learn L2 because of the inherent pleasure in doing so.

Theory and Measurement

Hegemony

Gramsci’s ordinary life has been turned into an extraordinary life since 1921 when he was elected as a member of Central Italian Communist Party (PCI). At this stage, he primarily presented his concept of “hegemony.” In fact, the origin of the concept has been emerged from Lenin. The concept “hegemony” was used as a slogan in Russian Social-Democratic Movement that took place in between 1890 to 1917. Gramsci gave a new form of the concept of “hegemony,” whereas Lenin used the concept of the meaning of the dictatorship of the proletariat. The crushing of workers’ revolts in Europe and the failure of the Italian working class movement took place due to the inability of the working class to form alliances with other subordinate groups. In order to form a genuinely popular national organization it is much needed to overcome the divisions. The industrial working class lead their subalterns through ideological means and provide the center of any progressive movement. In its simplest form, this is what Gramsci means by “hegemony” [13].

The term “hegemony” in Gramsci itself has two faces. On the one hand, it is contrasted with “domination” and on the other hand, “hegemonic” is sometimes used as an opposite of “corporate” or “economic-corporate” to designate an historical phase in which a given group moves beyond a position of corporate existence and defence of its economic position and aspires to a position of leadership in the political and social arena. Non-hegemonic group or classes are also called by Gramsci “subordinate,” “subaltern” or sometimes “instrumental” [10].

The concept of “hegemony” is really a very simple one. It means political leadership based on the consent of the led, a consent which is secured by the diffusion and popularization of the world view of the ruling class. The term was introduced by Plekhanov, Axelrod, Lenin and others in the dispute with the “Economists” over the issue of “spontaneity”. In advocating the hegemony of the proletariat over the peasantry and the party over the proletariat, Plekhanov’s group was in essence affirming the necessity of elite leadership in a backward cultural situation [2]. According to Norturbo Bobbio, the term was used more by Stalin than by Lenin, who preferred the terms “leadership” and “management,” and when he did use “hegemony” it was synonymous with leadership [2].

Bates opines that though no where does Gramsci criticizes Lenin’s theory, it is clear that his own response is contained in the theory of hegemony, which does not seek an explanation in “economic” data, but in “cultural” data. Actually, hegemony refers to the processes by which the class interests of the elite are universalized via institutions and then internalized by the rest of the population [2].

Instead of seeing the economy as determining culture and politics, Gramsci argues that culture, politics, and the economy are organized in a relationship of mutual exchange with one another, a constantly circulating and shifting network influence. To this process he gives the name “hegemony” [13]. Gramsci regarded every hegemonic relationship as an “educational” one—i.e. hegemony entails the education of individuals and groups in order to secure consent to the dominant group’s agenda [15].

English language has become the dominant medium in the education system of Bangladesh. An individual’s ability in the English language determines what stream he/she will be put in, what type of education he/she will be
given and what levels of education he/she will achieve—this is the major exemplified manifestation of the hegemonic status of English.

SUST is one of the prominent state-funded public universities in Bangladesh, which encourages the use of English language. English is used in classroom lectures, tutorials, midterm examinations, and for writing assignments/dissertations and so forth. On the contrary, Bangla is assigned a subaltern status.

**Methodology**

Multi-Storied Sampling has been applied for this study. Firstly, researchers conducted lottery among eight departments of the school of social sciences at Shahjalal University of Science and Technology for determining fourth year second semester students. Among them three departments namely Public Administration, Economics, and Sociology, with a number of 152 students have been selected as respondents. In order to determine the response rate, researchers have supplied the questionnaire to all and made it optional for them to send back. Within the stipulated timeframe 103 responses are received eventually out of 152 students and this small sample size is the drawback of the study.

Questionnaire with 10 items ordinal scale variables are constructed to determine the motivation in learning English. Both *Instrumental* and *Integrative* motivations have been measured through 5 items on each. Likert type distance on each question is used in order to measure the motivation of the respondent. From these 10 items, three items are identified for each force of hegemony. Therefore, researchers have obtained indices for each item and finally developed a composite index for “each force” of hegemony. To end with, Non-Parametric Correlation (Spearman rho) has been used to reveal the strength of relationship among variables.

**Rationale**

In Bangladesh, recently different kinds of multinational organizations like banks, research farms, and other NGO’s have been established which create huge amount of job opportunities. Students of Public Administration, Economics, and Sociology have the general notion to be engaged in these myriad types of multinational institutes of the labor market in Bangladesh. One of the basic requirements to work in these organizations is to have sufficient knowledge on English language as these organizations are internationally recognized as well as creating links concerning trade and business between Bangladesh and other countries.

After higher secondary exams, taking few courses on English language in first and second year of their under graduation, students are still struggling to do better in English. Realizing their shortcomings, they go for external training if they can enrich their English language skills. Seeing this catastrophic upshot researchers selected fourth year second semester students as they are in the entry position to start their journey for competing in the labor market.

**Findings**

**Instrumental Motivation**

Corresponding modal values of instrumental motivation of learning English are found with the following outcomes:

For the statement “It will give me better and standard job” mode is “Strongly Agree” (value 5 denoted by Likert Type Scaling Technique). “Agree” (value 4) is the result of the statement “I want to go to UK/Aus/USA/Canada.” Likewise, the result is “Agree” (value 4) while throwing the statement “It will make me smarter.” “It is needed for my graduation and post graduation” demonstrates “Strongly Agree” (value 5). For the statement “It can bring more prestige” obviously the result is “Agree” (value 4).

More than half of the respondents (56.3%) “Strongly Agree” and they are convinced to learn English for better and standard job where two-third of them (35.0%) “Agree” but not “Strongly Agree” as they learn English for going to UK/USA/Aus/Canada. Almost half (49.5%) of the respondents “Agree” but not “Strongly Agree” that this language learning will make them smarter. These three responses have been labeled as money economy forces of Gramscian hegemony. Around 57.3% respondents “Strongly Agree” that learning English is needed for their graduation and post graduation whereas 46.6% of them “Agree” but not “Strongly Agree” that it can bring more prestige for them in society. The former one is labeled as the human capital force and the latter is the social force.
Integrative Motivation

Corresponding modal values of integrative motivation of learning English are found with the following upshot:

The mode is “Strongly Agree” (value 5) for the first item named “English is an international language.” For the second item “English is very interesting language,” the mode is on “Agree” (Value 4). For the item named “I am greatly influenced by my English Teacher,” the modal value is 4 which correspond to “Agree.” “I have fascination for native English speaker and want to talk like them,” for this item the modal value is 4 which corresponds “Agree.” And the final modal value is 5 corresponding “Strongly Agree” for the statement “I want to understand English TV programmes/movies/books/newspapers/songs etc.”

For generating and developing human capital grasping of English language is an indicative motivation for individuals. Around 71.8% respondents “Strongly Agree” with this statement. Only 52.4% of them “Agree” but not “Strongly Agree” that they learn English just for it is an interesting language. Being influenced by their English teacher they learn English, “Agree” is 54.4% but not “strongly agree.” Similarly, 52.4% of the respondents only “Agree” for having fascination to speak like a native English speaker. The last statement for them is “I want to understand English TV programmes/movies/books/newspapers/songs, etc.” where 58.3% respondents responded that they “Strongly Agree” with the statement.

Correlation

The most significant correlation co-efficient 0.58 is found between the variables “It can bring more prestige in society” and “It will make me smarter” which is significant on 0.05 level. Secondly, another strong relationship is seen between the two other variables “I am greatly influenced by my English teacher” and “It can bring more prestige in society” and the co-efficient for these are 0.446.

The first variable of both instrumental and integrative motivation which denoted as “It will give me a better and standard job” and “English is an international language” exhibit that the correlation coefficient 0.374 which is significant at 0.05 level. An interesting negative correlation coefficient -.078 is seen between the variables “English is an international language” and “I want to go to UK/USA/Aus/Canada.” It signifies an interesting attribute of SUST students that they are integrative than the instrumental to learn English language. The strength of relation between social force and money economy force is 0.374 which is reflected between the two working variables named “English is a very interesting language” and “It will give me a better and standard job.”

Indices

Following HDI (Human Development Index), present researchers developed some indices to determine comparative measures of all hegemonic forces. The index scores range between 0-1. Higher scores designate the superiority of forces over one another. Index values for each item has been calculated and followed to measure a composite index for each force, which consists of three different items. The composite index score is obtained through adding all item scores of a force and taking the value of its one-third proportion of each item. Every item is scaled with equal distance and five item scale was developed providing higher weight to the most conforming value level.

Therefore, Human Capital Force Index \( I_{ih} \) is measured by following formula:

\[
I_{ih} = \frac{1}{3} (I_{ih1} + I_{ih2} + I_{ih3})
\]

\[
= \frac{1}{3} (0.927+0.626+0.867)
\]

\[
= 0.807
\]

Here, \( I_{ih1} = 0.927 \), Score obtained from the first item English is an international language.

\( I_{ih2} = 0.626 \), Score obtained from the second item I am greatly influenced by my English Teacher.

\( I_{ih3} = 0.867 \), Score obtained from the third item It is needed for my graduation/post graduation.

Second, Money Economy Force Index \( I_{im} \) is measured as:

\[
I_{im} = \frac{1}{3} (I_{im1} + I_{im2} + I_{im3})
\]

\[
= \frac{1}{3} (0.877+0.578+0.558)
\]

\[
= 0.671
\]
I_{im1} = 0.877, Score obtained from the first item *It will give me better and standard job.*

I_{im2} = 0.578, Score obtained from the second item *I want to go to UK/Aus/USA/Canada.*

I_{im3} = 0.558, Score obtained from the third item *It will make me smarter.*

Finally, The Social Force Index ($I_{is}$) is measured as following:

$$I_{is} = \frac{1}{3} (I_{is1} + I_{is2} + I_{is3})$$

$$= \frac{1}{3} (0.667 + 0.728 + 0.709)$$

$$= 0.701$$

$I_{is1} = 0.667$, Score obtained from the first item of the force *English is very interesting language.*

$I_{is2} = 0.728$, Score obtained from the second item of the force *I have fascination for native English speaker and want to talk like them.*

$I_{is3} = 0.709$, Score obtained from the third item of the force *It can bring more prestige in society.*

It is found that $I_{ih}>I_{is}>I_{im}$ with corresponding index values as $0.807 > 0.701 > 0.671$. As values range between 0-1 and higher value indicates pre-eminence among forces so findings of the research designate Human Capital Force as a dominant dimension to create hegemony among SUST students. Study divulges that students are more accommodative for accumulating human capital. Simultaneously, Social Force dimension also scored 0.701 which superceded Money Economy Force. Findings help us to determine that SUST students are learning English not merely for an instrumental reason by which they can enter into the labor market, but they are highly integrative to enrich their own social and human capital.

**Concluding Remarks**

English has become more important to the people of Bangladesh. English is badly needed for various purposes. Apart from education, one such important purpose is international festival that brings people from every corner of the world closer and creates a huge opportunity for them to know each others’ culture and customs; to share each others’ knowledge; to exchange goods from one country to another country and this kind of attempt can be regarded as a part of globalization. Here English becomes the means of communication.

It is also an influential factor in deciding what jobs and salaries people can get in the job market. As Bangladeshi people have more contact with people from countries like the UK and the US, the probability for them to travel abroad becomes higher too. For these reasons, Bangladeshi students are often highly motivated to study English. Nevertheless, the learning and teaching of English has been a difficult task due to reasons such as lack of enough resources and so forth.

The paper took an attempt to investigate undergraduate non-English majors’ such as students of Economics, Public Administration and Sociology of Shahjalal University of Science and Technology (SUST) motivation towards learning English language. The study divulges that these non-English majors are instrumentally integratively motivated enough to learn English, which is similar to Gardner’s claim that integrative motivation is more influential in achieving success in the case of learning and acquisition of second language.

Institutionalized interactions generate “hegemony” for certain practices and behaviors of individuals. For SUST students, from this study, this is evident that individuals are highly conscious about the expansion of their human capital. The data showed the supremacy of human capital force over other two and this is a positive sign for generating knowledge based society. If individuals can enhance their human capital through proper communication, they can secure their social and money economy aspirations as required by the greater societies.
However, the findings in this study suggest some implications. As it is shown by the findings of the present study, the learners are more integratively motivated in learning English. Therefore, the researchers like to present few recommendations:

Teachers can create a pleasant soothing and supportive classroom atmosphere since there is no such thing as a “motivation formula.” That’s how a teacher can increase students’ self-confidence and satisfaction. Teachers should be friendly, reliable, considerate, polite, sincere, dependable and cheerful. Above all, teacher-student rapport needs to be trusting, sensitive, fascinating and colorful.

Teachers need to put a great deal of thought into developing programs that maintain students’ interest via creating interesting lessons in which the learners’ attention is gained. Encouraging students to become more active participants in a lesson can sometimes assist them to see a purpose for improving their communication skills. As the study reveals that the learners are motivated both integratively and instrumentally, so more attentions should be emphasized for combining both motivations. This combination will help individuals to build up their own competence to make them more than eligible to enter into the labor market.

To enhance the students’ positive attitudes toward and motivation to learn English and ultimately improve their English proficiency, it might be beneficial for the Shahjalal University authority to offer English Language Courses containing listening and speaking modules throughout the university years (preferably including in the syllabus) so that non-English majors could have regular contact with the target language.

Teachers and syllabus designers need to be sensitive to learners’ motives by recognizing their instrumentality. It is important to train the students with a view to keeping instrumentality in mind, for example, on how to do well at the interviews, to write formal letters such as Business Letters, Public Relation Letters, Inquiry Letters, Request Letters, Refusal Letters, Press Releases, Proposals, Resumes, Faxes and E-mails. Textbooks should be more up to date, functional and attractive in order to meet the learners’ instrumental motives. As our findings bestow the higher scores for human capital force, it is good to observe for individual development of the English language learning. Moreover, the use of an interesting text can help to increase the motivation level of students in the classroom which can stimulate other two forces as well. Often texts contain material which fails to capture the interest of students.

Response rate toward the questionnaire survey is 67.76% (103 responses out of 152). It is known, for mailed questionnaire survey, 15-20 percent response rate is significant enough to draw a statistical inference. Responses of the respondents are not very good in regard to its questionnaire distribution process. For developing a sound knowledge based society students of Bangladesh should be more integrative in this issue.

References

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