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## Language learner

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## 16. Language Learner

Abstract: The second language and culture “individual-learner” corresponds to a complex and multifaceted entity composed of social, emotional, cognitive and discourse-based variables. On a pedagogical level, as the implementation of educational endeavours consists in putting tools at the service of individual-learners to foster language and culture 2 acquisition, it seems necessary to explore the conditions under which bridges could be built between social psychology, applied linguistics and second language teaching and learning. Our choice has been to address these individual-learners' language-based, core components, from a social-psychological perspective. This paper will define who the second language and culture individual-learners are and account for the psychosocial states that the learning process may trigger in them.

**Keywords: language learning, language learner, sociocultural language acquisition model, educational endeavour, individual socio-psychological variable**

### 1. Introduction

When learning a second language, the learner is first and foremost a social actor, i.e. “un produit constamment restructuré des influences présentes, ou passées des multiples agents de socialisation” (Dubar 2002, 109) whose aim, ultimately, is to gain fluency in and mastery of a given target language-culture (L/C 2), according to the discursive standards “in force” in the area(s) – geographical, social, political, or other – in which this code is in use. As such, the L/C 2 “individu-apprenant”<sup>1</sup> (Bogaards 1991) corresponds to a complex and multifaceted entity composed of social, emotional, cognitive and discourse-based variables whose singularity embraces features as varied as his/her own particular identity, personality or cognitive styles and whose purpose is to try to move towards a linguistic and cultural reality which is different from his/her source language(s).

On a pedagogical level, implementing educational endeavours consists in putting tools at the service of the individual-learner (IL) to foster L/C 2 development. As such, the consideration of the ILs' unique variables appears to be “fundamental” (Robinson 2002, 124) for instructional designers and teaching staff when designing and setting up pedagogical artefacts since ILs precisely hold a central place within them, as users (Brockett/Hiemstra 1991).

In this respect, it seems necessary to study the conditions under which bridges could be built between social psychology, applied linguistics and second language teaching and learning. Our choice has been to address those links from a socio-psychological perspective. This paper will be an

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<sup>1</sup> Throughout this chapter, the “individu-apprenant” (Bogaards 1991) will be referred to as “individual-learner”.

attempt to define – as far as possible – who the L/C 2 ILs are and to account for the psychosocial actions that the learning process requires from them.

## 2. Social Psychology and the L/C 2 Acquisition/Learning Process

According to Morin/Nair's conception of society (1997, 37), the socialization process induces ILs to gradually adopt specific sets of behaviours in order to become social actors of a social group and to be recognized as such by their peers (Gardner/Lambert 1972; Bogaards 1991, 53). The process of socialization thus implies an interaction with a given social environment. Through this "language socialization" (###4. Language Socialization), ILs are exposed to the language of their social group – which they eventually may acquire. Developing the competence to use a language – whether it be an L1 or L2 – therefore is a social acquisition (Atkinson 2002). As such, language acquisition contributes to the development of one's own social identity (###5. Language and Identities) by leading the individual to learn and internalize the social and cultural aspects of a given community and to integrate them into the structure of his/her personality in order to adapt to the social environment in which he/she lives (Rocher 1969, 105). Let us review these concepts and analyse their implications on the second language acquisition process.

### 2.1 Identity

Cohen-Émerique/Hohl (2002, 200) understand identity as a twofold concept which encompasses, on the one hand, a personal, self-identity, and, on the other hand, a social one. Both types are involved in one's identity construction and may thus reflect and refer to language-based aspects of the IL.<sup>2</sup>

■ *Personal identity* alludes to active and adaptive cognitive functions by virtue of which the IL may come to terms with his/her own person and the world around him/her. This dimension derives both from heredity and neurophysiological maturation on the one hand and, on the other hand, from personal experience. Personal identity has to do with the morphological, physical and physiological characteristics all individuals are endowed with. Personal identity includes, for instance, the ability that human beings have to manipulate language and which requires, in addition to verbal and linguistic aspects both para-verbal elements (e.g. intonation, rhythm of speech and the use of silence) and non-verbal elements (e.g. postures, gestures or attitudes) which play an important structuring and monitoring role in interactional contexts (Forgas 1985). These physical attributes give ILs the opportunity to *identify themselves*, and, in doing so, to grow and to "act" in their environment;

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<sup>2</sup> Language and identity influence one another (###5. Language and Identities). Our conviction is that a second language modifies the link between language(s) and identity that operates within an individual (Norton/Toohey 2011).

– *Social identity* is related with the power relationships which lie at the heart of all social environments, such as those associated with the language learning processes (Norton/Toohey 2011).

However, in order to interpret and act upon their social worlds, to come to terms with the social environment in which they live, and to direct their social practices, ILs will be sensitized to the social and cultural aspects of the community, in order to accommodate them (Rocher 1969, 105). Such accommodation does not necessarily entail the ILs' adherence to specific practices or values, but, rather, their capacity to identify these as such, even though they may however decide not to implement them.

## 2.2 Personality

The ILs' personality can be characterized as a consistent, fundamental set of traits or tendencies (Allport/Odbert 1936) which account for ways of functioning socially, regardless of time or context. In turn, the personality traits will influence the way in which individuals perceive events and their environment.

The personality traits of an IL have an impact on him/her when learning an L/C 2, not only in terms of the way s/he will perceive the L/C 2, but also as regards his/her attitude towards it.<sup>3</sup> The integration of the theories of personality within a language learning pedagogical framework seems convenient to avoid the consequences that the various traits can have on the L/C 2 teaching and learning practices:

- Bogaards (1991, 61), for example, indicates that oral comprehension is related to an individual's enterprising and sociable character, to extroversion and the absence of neuroticism, and that rather outgoing and stable ILs tend to get the best results in oral comprehension and expression. It follows that extroversion would be an important asset to reach a "good" performance level in oral expression (Brown 1973, 236; cited by Bogaards 1991, 64);
- In contrast, ILs showing introverted personalities (Cheng/Horwitz/Shallert 1999), and who would not manifest a particular "willing(ness) to communicate" in their first language(s) would be even less prone to do so in an L/C 2 (MacIntyre 2007).

These examples suggest that the personality traits are part and parcel of a complex system built around the ILs, and include self-based constructs such as one's self-concept, attitude and beliefs, which ILs have about themselves and whose influence on the L/C 2 acquisition process is now beyond a doubt (Arnold 2006).

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<sup>3</sup> We do not regard "second language-culture" as two separate elements, but, rather, as a twofold, mutually determining ensemble.

### 2.3 Self-based constructs

Three self-based constructs will be taken into account for our characterization of the ILs. These are: self-concept, attitude, and self-esteem.

#### 2.3.1 Self-concept

Godefroid (2001, 626s.) defines the “self-concept” as the self-knowledge the individual possesses, which grants him/her “une certaine stabilité interne, en la protégeant contre les changements, mais également une flexibilité suffisante la rendant capable de s’adapter, lorsqu’elle est confrontée à son environnement social ou qu’elle est amenée à prendre des décisions” – what Norton/Toohey (2011) call “investment” in the case of L/C 2 learning. Any learning experience entails a process of personal development, which may have an impact on the IL's self-concept. It is up to the actor who occupies the tutoring position to account for this, in order to develop a mediating pedagogy suitable for the IL’s objectives – namely by accompanying the discovery of his/her very self-concept(s).

#### 2.3.2 Attitude and L/C 2 teaching-learning

The concept of attitude includes emotions (###17. Cognition and Emotion) – which fall within the area of affect (Triandis 1980) – such as joy, pleasure, disgust, discontent and hatred – which ILs will associate with certain behaviours and which will influence their psychological disposition to act toward a given object, namely an L/C 2. The IL’s behavioural intent is besides also determined by his/her subjective standards concerning a given behaviour s/he would happen to adopt within an L/C 2-use situation.

If we refer to Fishbein and Ajzen’s theory of reasoned action (1975), this belief-based mechanism would have a direct effect on the IL’s attitude and on his/her behavioural intention(s) (cf. Figure 1) – as suggested in the figure below:

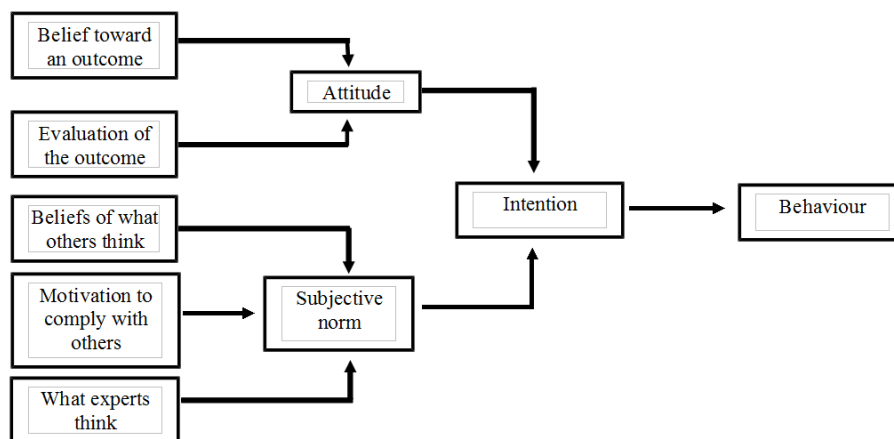


Figure 1: The theory of reasoned action by Fishbein/Ajzen (1975)

According to Castellotti/Moore (2002, 11), the negative image a learner may have about a specific community – the authors suggest the negative attitude that French learners may have towards Germany as a country – may support the negative vision of an L/C 2 that is difficult to learn. On the opposite, Jones (1991) shows how intensive courses of Welsh – mainly addressed to young learners who strongly feel they belong to the Welsh community – may lead to higher levels of acquisition in comparison with neutral L/C 2 contexts – where a lesser feeling of belonging would be observed. As a matter of fact, the IL's feelings and judgements influence the way s/he will collect, integrate, and make sense of any situation and any learning object.

### ***2.3.3 Self-esteem***

Self-esteem is primarily emotional (Leary/Downs 1995, 134). If one individual's cognitions about his/herself are not consistent with what that individual's actions suggest as his/her current competences in a given matter/practice, there is a great chance that the IL's self-esteem will not reflect reality (Epstein 1991). For example, an individual can lack self-esteem and thus forget about his/her strengths, e.g. when an IL reckons s/he is experiencing L/C 2 learning difficulties at school while s/he is instead having difficulties making a difference between two sounds<sup>4</sup>, the IL could thus be led to underestimate the other skills s/he has because of this particular problem. The influence of an IL's beliefs on his/her learning process is significant (Cotterall 1995, 195). As the ILs' self-esteem and beliefs can also predict their learning outcome (Harter 1983), it is important, on a pedagogical level, that the IL's self-knowledge be as accurate as possible, possibly through the mediation of a tutoring third party.

### ***2.4 Social psychology, L/C 2 acquisition and pedagogical implications***

Whatever the nature of the educational artefact, Bogaards (1991, 100) reminds “qu'il y ait apprentissage ou non, cela dépend de l'apprenant” and that “l'enseignant ne peut que mettre en place les conditions favorisant l'apprentissage [...] se mettre au service de l'apprenant qui, lui, peut profiter de ses services, ou non”.

As an IL's profile – behavioural, discursive, psychological, social – may vary over time, the particular social and psychological constructs discussed above may be more or less salient and their influence on a learning situation may evolve. Nonetheless, it is useful, for pedagogical supervision purposes to take into account these constructs, as well as the ILs' beliefs and attitudes, in order to

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<sup>4</sup> For instance, native Spanish-speaking learners of French find it difficult to distinguish [u] and [y]. This difficulty concerns both their ability to perceive the acoustic and articulatory differences between the two phonemes, and consequently to implement such differences into their own production – both on segmental and supra-segmental levels.

positively accompany their development. This may be achieved by giving them the opportunity to be in situations where they will do well, particularly at the early stages of the learning process (Bandura 1995). Indeed, the first attempts when learning an L/C 2 are the most delicate ones, insofar as they play a key role in one's construction of a sense of competence and, in turn, determine the ILs' subsequent involvement in similar tasks (Kanfer/Ackerman/Heggstad 1996) (cf. Figure 2).

Measuring these variables, as well as their likely influence all along the L/C 2 development process, is consistent with pedagogical approaches based on sociocultural theories, which adhere to a non-linear, complex, and evolving characterization of all learning processes (Larsen-Freeman/Cameron 2008).

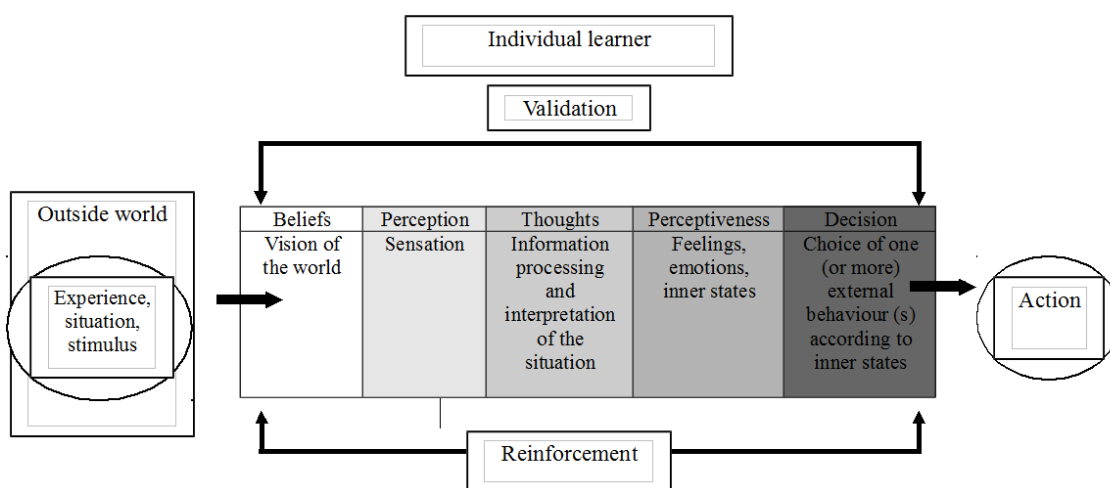


Figure 2: Beliefs and L/C 2 learning-teaching

Figure 2 shows that, following Rogers (1961), having a positive self-image helps to gain confidence and be successful in a learning situation and that, conversely, a negative self-image causes low self-esteem and failure. Teaching ILs how to “self-regulate” (Wenden 1998), that is to say, take control of their learning process and procedures, appears to be an educational approach to promote since becoming responsible for one's learning process favours autonomy.

### 3. Individuation/Socialization vs. L/C 2 Teaching-Learning

So far, we have characterized the language learner as an individual whose social and psychological traits determine whatever language-learning endeavours. We have suggested the link among such social-psychological constructs and any learning experience. A learning process of a “foreign”

language and a culture, different from those said to be the native ones, may thus be defined as yet another process of internal change<sup>5</sup> which may lead – or aim – not only to develop new skills, but also to promote changes in the IL’s constructs, values and beliefs (Mezirow 1981).

The development process of an L/C 2 is currently described by second language acquisition (SLA) emergentism theories as a dynamic system (###6. Language Acquisition Theories). The focus is on all the elements which integrate the system, rather than on isolated parts of it. Any changes undergone by one of the identified variables will affect the whole system. The only thing that can be predicted about the system is that it will be led to change. Consequently, according to emergentist theories, the only thing that can be predicted about a language learning process is that learning there will be – it remains difficult to predict *what* will become the object of such learning, *when* this learning will take place, or *by virtue of which* actions it will be brought to happen (Larsen-Freeman/Cameron 2008).

### **3.1 Models of L/C 2 learning: language-based and individual-centred approaches to SLA**

Learning an L/C 2 implies for the ILs not only managing new sets of discourses and practices, but also operating in a field of action whose social and cultural structure are different from the one(s) in which they originally developed. This, in turn, may lead to a certain destabilization. Learning an L/C 2 therefore induces having one’s personal identity undergo a process of acculturation (Schumann 1978), i.e. gradually moving from a sense of belonging to a group (associated with cultural practices and a cultural background) with which the learner self-identifies to a more open one including (an)other group(s) normally representing otherness. The result of this process is a “new” sense of belonging and a multiple identification.

As a matter of fact, learning an L/C 2 requires the ILs to “renegotiate” themselves, by integrating into their self-concept (formed in one or more L1) the vast notion of otherness, namely the variables “foreign language” and “foreign culture” of the L/C 2, to which they attempt to be open. In this respect, two major trends can be distinguished in SLA: a cognitive SLA model and a sociocultural one (###6. Language Acquisition Theories). According to Foster/Ohta (2005, 402ss.) cognitive SLA perceives learning as a mental process through which morphosyntactic, phonological and lexical structures are integrated, while, in the sociocultural perspective, learning is seen as a social process in which the context and the participants are inseparable. In effect, scholars within the social-cultural theories paradigm draw on Vygotski’s (1978) notion of scaffolding to explain the pedagogical bond between two individuals. By virtue of this bond, the learner may undergo a learning experience (Bruner 1998) (###6. Language Acquisition Theories).

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<sup>5</sup> One of the first being the learning of the mother tongue(s).



### ***3.1.1 The cognitive SLA model of L/C 2 learning***

According to Firth/Wagner (2007), the pedagogical approaches originating from cognitive SLA models may fail to address the complex relation between learning and identity. Learning an L/C 2 may accordingly be seen as detrimental to “l’image de soi, à la conscience de soi en tant qu’être unique en continuité avec soi-même” (Cohen-Émerique/Hohl 2002, 199s.). It follows that the L/C 2 learning outcome – in acquisitional terms – depends, in addition to factors inherent to the ILs, on how they conduct and are involved in their learning process, on the way they are led to learn, or on their beliefs regarding the target L/C 2. A clarification of the role of the personality variables and their influence on the ability to succeed in an L/C 2 learning endeavour is necessary because non-cognitive influences would have an impact which would be, in this approach, at the very least equal, not to say more important in the L/C 2 learning process (Sparks/Ganschow 2001, 100).

In effect, Firth/Wagner (2007, 801) are critical towards cognitive models. According to these authors, such models mainly focus on the linguistic and pragmatic failures of the ILs – who are regarded as faulty interlocutors, insofar as their only identity choices are to be made among *native* and *non-native* (Firth/Wagner 1997, 292).

### ***3.1.2 The sociocultural SLA model of L/C 2 learning***

Sociocultural SLA models take into account not only language and discourse-related phenomena, but also social and psychological factors. For those who adhere to sociocultural SLA models, L/C 2 learning requires the implementation of specific, specialized (Firth/Wagner 1997, 292) social practices, and also the carrying out of human actions, the performance of social practices and the embodiment of identities (Mondada/Pekarek Doehler 2004, 504). A process which goes beyond abstract, linear and cumulative perspectives on language learning (Firth/Wagner 2007, 804), and which requires a permanent construction, which is accomplished collectively and publicly through one-off activities, within social contexts (ibid., 807).

Close to this position, Ellis (2003, 181) highlights how sociocultural SLA – through the concept of scaffolding – offers a more complete view of learning than cognitive SLA: while the second view focuses exclusively on the cognitive aspects involved in the L/C 2 learning process, the first also encompasses emotional or personal aspects, which highlights, once more, the possible influence which self-image might have on cultural patterns in the case of a theory for learning an L/C 2.

## **3.2 The L/C 2 learner at the heart of an autonomous learning process**

The distinction aforementioned between cognitive and sociocultural models of SLA will induce us

to reflect on what may be acquisitionally and pedagogically appropriate L/C 2 learning environments – which account for both psycholinguistic and social-psychological constructs and processes. These environments will lead us to focus on the tutors' responsibilities within institutional learning contexts.

### ***3.2.1 ILs' self-based constructs, autonomous learning and socioconstructivism***

From a sociocultural point of view, the role of teachers and education, as far as ILs are concerned, is to help accompany the latter towards autonomous practices liable to assist them in their own learning processes (Narcy-Combes 2005). In the case of L/C 2 teaching-learning, this entails having ILs to:

- be actively in charge of everything that is related to the learning process, that is to say its definition, its management and its evaluation (Holec 1991) and this is all the more true for adult learners since, for them, self-learning and personal responsibility are strongly encouraged (Candy 1991);
- take the responsibility for their own learning – i.e., the ILs' personal commitment to act according to specific social values that favour a collective endeavour, such as an institutional learning process. As such, a learning environment based on a collaborative pedagogical approach, calls for a contract that binds the teacher and the learners.

In this respect, we agree with Henri/Lundgren-Cayrol (2001), for whom collaborative learning is a “*démarche active par laquelle l'apprenant travaille à la construction de ses connaissances*” and for whom a collaborative learning environment must comply with certain principles:

- the knowledge is to be explored and broken down into distinct elements, rather than become an object that learners take in as a whole;
- learning is to take place within realistic, authentic situations;
- the ILs are to actively and continuously interact with one another;
- their autonomy and interactive efficiency must be developed progressively;
- the higher-level competences – analysis, synthesis, problem solving, etc. – should be encouraged;
- the (meta)cognitive strategies are to be fostered in order to exploit efficiently the cognitive resources available;
- the ILs are to engage within the group, and to share common objectives;
- they are expected to support each other.

The last of the above principles is reminiscent of Jermann's (1996) characterization of a “good” learning environment, which allows for the learners to access a community of experts able to guide and counsel them and where knowledge is co-constructed within real experiences, by means of

language, accounting for the interactants' personal development (Bucheton/Bautier 1996). This raises the questions of feedback and mediation in the SLA process.

### **3.2.2 Collaborative learning and mediation**

Mediation is a central tenet to the constructivist approaches to learning (Vygotski 1978). As regards L/C 2 learning, two levels of mediation may be distinguished:

- between the knowledge and the learners;
- among the learners themselves.

Mediation requires a third party to accompany the ILs' reflective process(es). It seems appropriate to gauge the mediation according to the competences the learners have already acquired. These may, in effect, not only be the starting point for the mediator's task, but also contribute to ensuring that the ILs engage within an active process of personal development – we consider that all learning *is* a process of personal development. The mediator's role in this perspective is not only to encourage the scaffolding process (Bruner 1998) but also to invite the ILs to surpass it, so they may engage within a collective process of knowledge construction.

### **3.3 Situated learning and L/C 2 learning**

According to Lave/Wenger (1991), learning is a social practice, which results from the interaction and negotiation carried out by the members of a particular community of practices. As regards L/C 2 learning, this theory suggests that learning may only occur if the learners engage within a socially and culturally structured context. Interactions may thus allow ILs to identify the meaningful characteristics of the L/C 2, the differences between their mother tongue(s) and the L/C 2, but also between his/her present capacities and the L/C 2 norms, as observed in the *input* to which s/he is exposed (Robinson 2002).

If learning is understood as a situated practice, it follows that it results from the accomplishment of activities which have been collectively determined by all participants. This position accounts for the social constructivist approach of the human and of social interaction.

#### **3.3.1 Situated learning and information and communication technologies**

Information and communication technologies (ICT) seem to be relevant tools to materialize situated learning. ICT make it possible to design and implement complex, authentic and meaningful situations, which enable the learners to draw on their resources in order to construct collectively their knowledge, solve problems and develop their competences, as they position themselves within

a common realm of knowledge and practice by using the same communication code (both verbal and non-verbal) which will enable their recognition as members of the community by the other participants. The learners gradually construct their own learning process as they “thrive” within a given community of practice. Provided that the learners are able to manage the changes, this will, in due time, make their integration within the community possible (Lave/Wenger 1991).

### 3.3.2 Situated learning and pedagogical implications

Considering what has been stated so far, and from an institutional, educational level perspective, it appears that setting up knowledge-construction communities (Hewitt/Scardamalia 1998) where the learners may adequately co-construct their own knowledge, is appropriate as far as learning facilitation is concerned. In order to recreate the required authenticity within institutional learning environments, it is possible to situate teaching within macro-contexts that favour the exploration of knowledge from multiple points of view (Spiro et al. 1992). A project-based approach to teaching is coherent with a social-psychological characterization of ILs, insofar as it accounts for the ILs as “social agents”, i.e. members of a society who have tasks (not exclusively language-related) to accomplish in a given set of circumstances, in a specific environment and within a particular field of action” (Council of Europe 2001, 11). The table below synthesizes the different pedagogical implications resulting from our alignment with the social constructivist theories.

Learning	Pedagogical implications	Learners' functioning
The objective of the learning situation is to have the ILs deeply restructure their former knowledge (Fabre 1999).	ILs must be at the heart of an environment that aims for the integration and acquisition of both content-knowledge and skills (Holec 1991).	It is not possible to predict in which ways the learners will/may learn (Beillerot 1989).
The institution must aim for the learners' autonomy (Duquette 2002).	The learning environment must help create a favourable context which facilitates learning.	
	ILs are expected to actively take the responsibility for their learning (Holec 1991). As for the teacher, s/he keeps the chief responsibility for setting up the learning environment, as well as for gradually accompanying the learners towards an acceptance of their own responsibility (Smith 1990). The learners are expected to renegotiate themselves, i.e., they are expected to integrate within their core, personal, structure – built from other language(s) – the “language” and “culture” based elements	Learning an L/C 2 has consequences on both the ILs' self-conscience and self-image (Cohen-Émerique/Hohl 2002, 199s.)

	associated with the L/C 2 (cf. Schumann's (1978) acculturation theory).	
Within the context of a teaching-learning environment, the potentially favourable conditions must be made available, which may counterbalance any anxiety-related reactions from the ILs, as they attempt to use the L/C 2 (Horwitz/Horwitz/Cope 1986; Young 1986)	Motivation plays a key role in the process of learning an L/C 2 (Dörnyei 2007).	
	<p>Collaboration and scaffolding-based learning theories (Bruner 1998), seem an adequate pathway to set up pedagogical environments aiming at making language ego boundaries more permeable (Guiora/Acton 1979). A pedagogical approach based on the collaboration and scaffolding, makes it necessary for an external agent to mediate between the learner and the learning process (Vygotski 1978).</p> <p>ICT help set up authentic, situated, learning environments. The learners who take part in these environments may mobilize their resources, as well as co-construct new knowledge, and develop their skills. Such a development process may in turn grant them the acceptance of those who are recognized as full-time members of the community of practices for which the L/C2 learners aim.</p>	

Table 1: Social constructivism and L/C 2 learning/teaching

#### 4. Conclusion

This paper has portrayed the IL as an actor who functions socially, categorizes and is categorized in more than one language. As such, the IL has particular ways to situate her/himself within the different communities of practice to which s/he belongs, and also within which s/he aims for. The ILs are thus able to:

- process (receive, decode, encode, produce, retrieve, mistake, repair, contrast, compare, ...) temporary, constantly changing information in real time;
- modify, adapt, develop the (material, cognitive, social, human, strategic, economic, knowledge-based, technical, language-based) means by which s/he is able to process temporary, constantly changing information;
- functionally occupy a place and play specific roles within (a) given (geographical, political, historical, moral, ethical, social, communitarian, economical) evolving context(s);
- locally position her/himself (ideologically, emotionally, politically, morally, ethically, psychologically) in relation to the temporary context(s) s/he happens to occupy, in which s/he may play roles, and relate such position(s) and role(s) to former, parallel, other position(s) s/he may occupy and roles s/he may play;
- locally and sustainably imagine, construct, choose, renew, refuse, try out, implement, attempt, succeed, fail, attempt anew, abandon, export, import, (personal, collective) objectives within the local context(s) s/he happens to occupy;
- locally and sustainably modify, adapt, develop the (material, cognitive, social, human, strategic, economic, knowledge-based, technical, language-based) means by which s/he imagines, constructs, chooses, renews, refuses, tries out, implements, attempts, succeeds, fails, attempts anew, abandons, exports, imports (personal, collective) objectives within the local context(s) s/he happens to occupy.

This point having been made, it follows that the characterization of any language learner may not ignore personal and psychological aspects such as the IL's identity development. The identity development process includes complex aspects such as psycho-social constructs (e.g. gender, surname and first name, profession, age, etc.), the beliefs that the individual may integrate consciously (of a religious or ideological nature, for example), the psycho-cultural practices which the individual will regard in a certain manner (e.g. customs and rituals, cultural expressions and codes, etc.), the personal stories which shape the IL's life experience or the beliefs about one's personal traits (personality, intelligence, aptitudes, skills), physical appearance (health, physical condition, attractiveness), social relations (with family members, friends, work colleagues, and even with opponents), and also about the roles that the IL recognizes as his/her own (student, learner, accountant, teacher, engineer, ...).

From a general learning perspective and, consequently, from a culture and language learning point of view, it is crucial to integrate these social and identity-related aspects within a learning environment (###5. Language and Identities), for any social situation will provoke an emotional response from the individual, which s/he may recognize as adequate and specific to the situation in course (for example, learning or using an L/C 2 within an institutional learning environment) (Narcy-Combes 2005, 12). Consequently, the complex, individual and social networks depicted in this article shall be taken as the departure point for all educational endeavours, particularly when adults are concerned.

Learning an L/C 2 is not only a matter of learning linguistic aspects, but also social,

pragmatic, civilization-related, diachronic, or synchronic ones, for example, as it supposes a process of personal development along which the IL will broaden aspects of his/her own identity and personality. The depiction of language learning that we have attempted here is more encompassing insofar as it takes into account the identity-development process, which has an impact on both the teaching and learning tasks, and as a consequence, on the L/C 2 acquisition process.

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