

IDENTITY NEGOTIATION OF FEMALE L2 LEARNERS: A CASE STUDY OF THE INSTITUTE OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE, SINDH UNIVERSITY

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Abstract

This case study examines the English language learning experiences and identity construction of the female students of The Institute of English Language and Literature (IELL). Grounded in social constructivist and post structural feminist perspectives of identity, the present research highlights the social nature of language learning and learners. Like all human beings language learners are also social actors who undergo a process of identity negotiation at various stages of their learning (Block, 2007).

The study employed data collection tools appropriate for qualitative inquiry comprising of semi- structured interviews, focus group discussions and classroom participant observations. The L2 learning processes of the female learners are explored through the lens of feminist post structural theories which take into account the relationship of L2 learning, gender, power and multiplicity and fluidity of identity.

How these young females develop a sense of their self through the restrictive culture of Sindhi society, stringent patriarchy and social inequality between genders is explored in detail. The research is grounded in post structural notion of identity as socially mediated, contradictory, and fractured and a site of struggle. The data reveals the female learners' identity as multiple and contradictory and having multiple subject positions. In conclusion, the paper contends that the identity building of these young female learners stems out of the discursive practices that they take part in within and outside the classroom. Both gender and cultural discourses instill in these females a sense of their self which alters and is even contested with time. The gender and cultural discourses available to the females are normative and disciplinary, however these young women contest and resist these identity options in order to adopt more favorable identities through their L2 learning.

Keywords: Identity, gender, power, L2 learning.