Spring 4-23-2018

The Social Factors of Fossilization

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

Master of Arts in TESOL degree

at SIT Graduate Institute,

Brattleboro, Vermont

April 1, 2018

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Abstract

The notion of fossilization has been one of the most controversial, yet enduring topics in second language acquisition (SLA) theory since its first appearance in Selinker's 1972 seminal article "Interlanguage." In the past, work regarding fossilization sought to either support or challenge its existence, to determine the putative causes and to predict what linguistic items were prone to becoming fossilized. Initially, the possible causes which enjoyed the most attention were first language interference and the learner's age and length of residency in the target language community. Now, however, with the current climate of SLA acknowledging that both learning and non-learning are the result of multiple factors unique to each individual, more emphasis has been placed on how *social factors* contribute to the language learning process. This paper seeks to explore what exactly some of those social factors are, how they might relate to students who are studying English for academic purposes in the United States, and how this information applies to the classroom.

Keywords: second language acquisition, fossilization, social factors, sociolinguistics, speech accommodation theory, interaction-approach, corrective feedback, classroom discourse

Education Resources Information Center (ERIC) Descriptors

Interlanguage

Fossilization

Social Context

Speech Accommodation Theory

Interactive Feedback

NS-NNS Interaction

Interactive Needs Satisfaction

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The Social Factors of Fossilization

Not too long ago I chose to do a *short* literature review on fossilization. Somehow, I thought it would be an easy topic simply because I was interested in it. Upon beginning my work, I found that there is nothing simple about it at all. After reading Long's meta-analysis in his "Stabilization and Fossilization in Interlanguage Development" (2003), I began to wonder how I had entertained the term in reference to my international students who realistically never had more than but a few years of real exposure, thus making it impossible for them to have *fossilized*. Long points out that given the U-shaped learning curves of both children learning their first language (L1) and adult second language learners, claiming that a learner's interlanguage has fossilized, a phenomenon which denotes permanency "is unfalsifiable in [one's] lifetime" (p. 490). Similarly, the message conveyed in Larsen-Freeman's article "Second Language Acquisition and the Issue of Fossilization: There Is No End, and There Is No State" (2006) that language is an ever-evolving system, lacking an end-state made me begin to wonder why so many people in the field, teachers and researchers alike, have devoted so much time dissecting this concept which essentially focuses on *errors* and the notion of a predetermined target language (TL) finish line.

However, one aspect of fossilization that consistently caught my attention while reading was mention of the various social factors which have been identified as being putative causes. It was in the sections regarding the role of speech accommodation theory, acculturation, interactive feedback and interactive needs satisfaction that I considered my own student population and how what was being described might relate to them. For the last four years I have been teaching English for Academic Purposes (EAP) to international students living in the United States. More often than not, I teach the most advanced speaking classes; the last speaking class students take

before they venture out into the world of the American higher education system. I often marvel

at how, despite my best efforts employing various strategies aimed at strengthening student's

ability to recognize and self-correct their own mistakes and the one to two years of intensive

formal instruction they have received, many students seem to stagnate in their last few months,

exhibiting little development. Similarly, I am equally surprised how just a few months after

beginning classes at our host institute, those same students who return for a friendly visit seem to

have made significant strides in their language proficiency. Granted one could logically argue

that the progress made in that time was a direct result of how long the student had been in the

United States, length of residency (LOR), I find it hard to believe that *that* variable in and of

itself could be responsible for the positive change. I began to wonder if the improvements I

witness could possibly be attributed to a change in social environment. And so, it's not so much

fossilization that I wish to explore, but rather the social factors that have been identified as

potentially contributing to it, and how comparing the social environment of our classrooms to

that of the world beyond could be useful, not necessarily to prevent fossilization, but to promote

the opposite, language development.

<div align="center">The Social Turn of SLA</div>

To begin this work, it is first necessary to speak more broadly about what Block has

referred to as being the 'social turn' of SLA (as cited in Ellis, 2015, p. 205). In 1997 Firth and

Wagner published an article in which they challenged the cognitive era of SLA theory that had

dominated the 1980's with theories such as the input processing model, claiming that it was

"individualistic and mechanistic and failed to account for the interactional and sociolinguistic

dimensions of language" (Firth & Wagner, 1997, p. 285). While they did not deny the cognitive

processes involved in additional language learning, they proposed an approach to SLA which

integrated the social and the cognitive, exploring how social factors influenced cognitive

processes necessary for acquisition.

Not surprisingly, this sentiment was not accepted by all. For years language learning had

been thought of as an individual phenomenon occurring within the mind of the learner,

impervious to external influences. One of the biggest contenders of the ideas put forth by Firth

and Wagner was Long. In an article written as a response to Firth and Wagner Long (1998)

wrote:

> Remove a learner from the social setting, and the L2 grammar does not change or
>
> disappear. Change the social setting altogether, e.g., from street to classroom, or from
>
> a foreign to a second language environment, and, as far as we know, the way the learner
>
> acquires does not change much either[.] (p. 93)

Gass, who is known for her work in the area of input, interaction and the role of noticing,

agreed with Long pointing out the distinction between *participation* and *acquisition*. She

believed that while participation provided input, acquisition was strictly a result of cognitive

processes and she therefore regarded "SLA as a branch of cognitive science" (as cited in Ellis,

2015, p. 211).

Similarly, Gregg (1990) who takes a Chomskyan approach to SLA found it necessary to

distinguish between *performance* and *competence*. In considering variation within second

language use, Tarone (1983) and R. Ellis (1985) had proposed that learner's linguistic knowledge

(competence) could be determined by social and or linguistic variables. Given his generativist

orientation, Gregg found this proposal difficult to accept questioning if "we really want to claim

that a speaker knows, whether consciously or unconsciously, the probabilities for the production

of a specific form" (as cited in Tarone, 2007, p. 838). For Gregg, a learner's competence and

performance are unequivocally different and interlanguage (IL) variation is a matter of performance only.

Despite the fact that the call to incorporate social factors into the conversation on SLA theories and research was met with some contention, it has since become the source of numerous SLA studies which can provide some insight into how the two are interrelated. Tarone (2007), for example, who advocates for using sociolinguistic models to explore variation in IL states three specific ways that social factors and cognitive processes involved in language acquisition are linked. First, social environment will influence the input and feedback received by learners; second, learners employ different aspects of their linguistic knowledge depending on social settings, with an emphasis on interlocutor; and third, social environment impacts how corrective feedback is processed.

Not surprisingly, the social turn not only influenced theories regarding second language learning, but also lack thereof. While it seems to be apparent that factors such as L1 interference, age and LOR in the target language (TL) community can all play a role in the onset of fossilization, findings from studies looking at these variables in isolation have proven to be inconclusive, with results contradicting the hypothesis at times. Similarly, longitudinal studies have revealed that one's learning trajectory is less predictable and more individualized than originally thought. Given these facts, it makes sense that more attention is now being given to how the interplay of all of the factors, cognitive, psychological and social, influence not only learning, but also what Han has referred to as *non-learning*.

Tarone specifically has strongly advocated for an exploration of social factors as they relate to fossilization. Naming social factors as the "root cause of fossilization," Tarone makes the point that how much a learner notices, a cognitive process essential for learning, is dictated

by the social context in which the learner is interacting in, thus clearly showing a relationship

between the social, psychological and cognitive (as cited in Larsen-Freeman, 2006, p. 193).

<div align="center">Defining Social</div>

Key to understanding the social turn is understanding what exactly is meant when one

uses the term *social factors.* In the chapter devoted to the social aspects of second language

acquisition R. Ellis (*Understanding Second Language Acquisition*, 2015) aims to clarify just this.

To do so he cites sociolinguist Jeff Siegel (2003) who maintains that there are in essence two

ways to view social, both of which have social context at their core. The first takes a structural

view of social context in which "social factors such as power and prestige are seen as

determining the context in which learners learn." The second, maintains an interactional

perspective in which "social context is seen as *constructed* dynamically in each situation" (cited

in Ellis, 2015, p. 206). To elaborate on the distinction between these views, and how they relate

to SLA, Ellis explains that in the first form, social context simply determines how much access

the learner has to linguistic input and the level of motivation that he or she has to take advantage

of it. Ellis states that "in this view, social factors do not alter the cognitive/psychological

processes responsible for acquisition" (2015, p. 206). In regard to the second social context

described by Siegel, Ellis expands on how it is connected to SLA by explaining that in this light,

learning is thought to be a social, not an individual phenomenon, and that it is through social

interactions that social context is formed.

What's interesting here is that, concerning the first explanation of social context, Ellis

makes the point that social factors do *not* influence cognitive and psychological processes

involved in acquisition. This stance is in opposition to Tarone who, as stated earlier holds the

belief that the cognitive process of noticing is indeed influenced by social relationships. If one

takes for example Schumann's Acculturation Model (1978) which is provided by Ellis as an

example for the first category of social context, it is likely that a learner who lacks motivation to

acculturate to the target language group may consequently 'turn off' their attention. In other

words, in both the first and second descriptions of social context, there is an intermingling of

psychological, social and cognitive factors at play.

      With that thought in mind, I now turn to an exploration of the social factors, both

contextual and interactional, which have at some point been associated with *fossilization*. It is

important to note that while I will use the term fossilization throughout I will do so only when

this was the word used in the literature. Again, I do not assume fossilization, and rather prefer to

look at the opposite end of the spectrum: language development. While there have been

numerous social factors linked to fossilization over time, I will focus specifically on some of the

theories which could be useful in explaining why my students, EAP students living in the United

States, appear to stabilize within the learning environment of our language center, and then

flourish upon transitioning to the university. I was particularly interested in those factors which

present points of contrast between the classroom and the world beyond because it is here where a

possible explanation may lie. As a backdrop to this research some of my guiding questions were:

1. Do students who seek to identify with and be accepted by the target language community, in this case other college students, develop faster and more steadily?

2. Do students note a difference between social interactions which take place in and out of the classroom? Do students register corrective feedback received outside of class differently than when in class?

3. Can the comfort of the classroom actually hinder language development?

<div align="center">Speech Accommodation Theory (SAT)</div>

      One of the most obvious and major changes which naturally occurs once language

learners move on from language preparation classes to university classes is *who* they speak with

and *who* they are surrounded by. Not only are they receiving a different type of input, rich with slang, idioms and curse words, but the recipients of their output have changed as well. They are no longer surrounded by other language learners, but rather mainly by *native speakers* (NS) of the target language (TL). The question that arises from this change then becomes: could student's speaking production improve because of a heightened desire to fit in with those around them? To answer this question, we draw from the field of sociolinguistics.

As a multidisciplinary field, sociolinguistics was born out of an interest to explore the connection between social and linguistic variables. Specifically, sociolinguists take interest in style-shifting and language variation. One of the most influential figures in the field, Labov (1970) argued that "there are no single style speakers" (p. 19). He attributed style shifting to the amount of attention paid and proposed that a speaker's speech will range upon a continuum from vernacular or informal speech, in which the least amount of attention is given, to what he called careful or formal speech, in which the most attention is paid.

This emphasis on monitoring was later challenged by Bell (1984) who, though not completely dismissing Labov's theory, called for more attention to be given to the role of the audience. In his article "Language Style as Audience Design" Bell wrote:

> Even if attention did prove to be consistently correlated with style, it would remain
>
> unsatisfactory as an explanation. We would still have to go behind the mechanistic
>
> attention variable to see what factors in the live situation are actually causing these
>
> differing amounts of attention. Setting attention aside as at most a mediating variable,
>
> we must attempt to relate style shift to the situational factors which cause it. (p. 150)

It was his opinion that first and foremost, the determining factor was *who* the speaker was interacting with: the audience.

One important theory which was developed out of need to further explore this exact

hypothesis was the speech accommodation theory (SAT). Stemming from what sociolinguists

Beebe and Giles (1984) deemed as an empirically necessary merge of the fields of social

psychology and sociolinguistics, speech accommodation theory "was devised to explain some of

the motivations underlying certain shifts in people's speech styles during social encounters and

some of the social consequences arising from them" (p. 7). Specifically, SAT sought to explain

the cognitive and psychological processes which cause speakers to either converge toward or

diverge away from the speech patterns of those around them. As can be inferred by the names,

convergence is used to describe when a speaker accommodates their speech to be more like that

of their audience, and *divergence,* on the other hand, is used to describe situations in which a

speaker opts to use speech patterns which will set them apart from those around them. It is

important to note here, that in addition to convergence and divergence there is also what has been

defined as speech maintenance, in which a speaker chooses to maintain their own speech patterns

even though they possess the linguistic ability to converge, likely as a means of maintaining their

own identity.

For the purpose of this paper, it is not *how* speakers accommodate their speech which is

of great importance but rather *why*. Beebe and Giles (1984), explained that while partaking in

various social interactions speakers may feel compelled to accommodate their speech for one or

more of the following reasons, "evoking listener's social approval, attaining communicational

efficiency between interactants, and maintaining positive social identities" (p. 8).

Initially, SAT was studied to assess how monolingual speakers accommodate their speech

across various contexts focusing on changes in the topic, setting and addressee of a given

situation. The purpose of early studies was to determine whether or not speakers accommodate

their speech according to these factors and if so how, when and why. With time SAT extended itself to bilingualism and served as one possible model for which to frame code-switching. While prior research had alluded to the influence of topic and setting in bilingual's choice of language, Bell (1984), who had coined the term *audience design*, argued that in the case of bilinguals code-switching, the audience of the speaker was the most important variable.

While SAT was originally designed as a means of explaining linguistic variation within L1 use and language choice of bilinguals, it is possible to see how the fundamental principles could be applied to international students studying in the United States. To begin, we turn to Tarone's summary of SAT as it relates specifically to L2 learners. She writes:

> This theory predicts the L2 learners will adjust their production of L2 forms to the forms that are used by their interlocutors. L2 learners may choose to converge, to sound more like interlocutors they wish to identify with, or to diverge from the speech patterns of interlocutors they do not wish to identify with. (Tarone, 2006, p. 161)

To support SAT in relation to IL variation Tarone (2006, 2007; Bayley & Tarone, 2011) offers three examples which demonstrate a correlation between learner's speech production and social context. The first, which is a clear example of divergence is Rampton's (1995) study of Pakistani English language learners in London. Though the initial intent of this study was to gain insight into the identity struggles the adolescent students faced while abroad, it did result in an interesting observation related to linguistic outcomes. It was observed that when addressing their non-Pakistani teacher, the students intentionally used the grammatically incorrect 'me no + verb' construction instead of 'I don't + verb.' This caught Rampton's attention because he noted that with peers, the same students exhibited complete ability to form the negative construction

correctly. In this case, it would seem that using the incorrect TL form served as a tool for the students to separate themselves from their teacher and assert their Pakistani identity.

The second example that Tarone makes use of to support her theory of how SAT is related to IL variation is that of Lybeck (2002). Here, Lybeck used a model known as 'social network analysis' to track the relationship between the acquisition of phonological forms in the L2 and the participant's degree of acculturation to the TL group. The participants involved were a group of American women sojourning in Norway for several years. Lybeck interviewed the participants two times, once in the fall, and again in the spring, and their Norwegian phonology was evaluated for nativeness by native phonologists. In addition to analyzing the women's pronunciation, the other vital piece of this study was that their social networks were also tracked through the interviews. In general, participants who included Norwegians as being part of their inner social group, and across various social settings used more native-like phonological features. On the other hand, participants who claimed not to have close-knit relationships with native Norwegians did not achieve native-like proficiency in the phonological variables under study. Furthermore, it was reported, that one woman, who upon interview 1 was deemed as having native-like phonology actually showed to have *regressed* dramatically by interview 2. Through interviews it was found that in the passing of time between interview 1 and 2, the woman had experienced what she perceived as being negative social interactions with native Norwegian speakers. Using SAT, it could be argued that these experiences had caused feelings of negativity towards the TL group which ultimately led to a divergence from TL norms.

The final example is significant because it illustrates a clear connection between social setting and the rate and the order in which the learner acquired various question forms. Liu (1991) followed the language development of Bob, a five-year-old Chinese immigrant to

Australia for over two years. In that time, Liu was interested in comparing Bob's interactions across three social settings: at home with friends or family, with peers at school and with his teacher at school. Of particular interest to Liu was Bob's acquisition of question constructions. Using Pienemann and Johnston's (1987) claim that L2 learners follow a fixed pattern of question formation moving from stage 1 to 5 as a point of reference, Liu found that Bob acquired stage 4 and 5 questions before stage 3. Also, of specific relevance to SAT, it was noted that all of the stages were used at home first, then with school friends, and lastly with the teacher. On this matter Liu (2000) pointed out that "if Bob's only social setting for English use had been in interactions with his teacher, his progress in acquiring L2 English would have been much slower" (as cited in Bayley and Tarone, 2011, p. 47). Though this finding doesn't necessarily show convergence or divergence, it shows the importance the interlocutor has on acquisition and illustrates what Preston (1989) referred to as change from the bottom; in other words, acquisition or linguistic variation which occurred implicitly and likely in an informal social setting.

Despite the fact that most of the work done that directly tests SAT as it pertains to SLA has focused on divergence from the TL, it is not impossible to see how SAT could also cause convergence. In Lybeck's study, for example, the women who stated they identified with native Norwegians on a sociocultural level exhibited stronger convergence to phonological Norwegian norms. In the case of international students enrolled in intensive English programs, because their classmates are not native speakers of the TL and are likely not yet perceived as belonging to the TL group, there may be little desire to converge to the linguistic TL norms. Likewise, upon entering university classes where interlocutors are primarily native speakers who are viewed as being members of the TL community, the desire to converge may be heightened resulting in IL development towards TL norms.

One of the key forces driving SAT is motivation, primarily motivation to assert or create one's identity within a speech community. Given that fact, Dornyei's L2 motivational self-system (2009) complements SAT well. Of the three concepts outlined in the motivational self-system, the first, the *ideal L2 self*, is of the most relevance. Dornyei explains how this notion functions writing "if the person we would like to become speaks an L2, the '*ideal L2 self*' is a powerful motivator to learn the L2 because of the desire to reduce the discrepancy between our actual and ideal selves" (as cited in Ellis, 2015, p. 53). Even though this model is based on intrinsic factors, to fulfill the future *self*, it stands to reason that the future self is interacting with others, a speech community.

Continuing the theme on identity, Norton (1995) believed that one of the main benefits learners achieve through language use is the ability to 'organize and reorganize' themselves. She proposed that learner's desire to do this is distinct from instrumental motivation and coined the term *investment*. Whether or not a learner *invests* into learning a language she claimed, depends on "how they see themselves in relation to their existing or imagined social communities" (as cited in Ellis, 2015, p. 230). Speaking to the power of imagined speech communities, Norton and McKinney write years later (2011) "imagined communities are no less real [sic] than the ones in which learners have daily engagement and might have a stronger impact on their identities and investments" (as cited in Ellis, 2015, p. 229). This thought is particularly important for teachers. One might ask if the classroom works itself into the imagined communities of our students.

In considering the application of SAT to SLA, particularly to the phenomenon of convergence, there are undoubtedly some issues which arise, the biggest likely being the recurring question of competence versus performance. In their article, which was one of the first

to discuss explicitly the implications of exploring SLA through the lens of SAT, Beebe and Giles

(1984) point out that the extension of using accommodation theories as a way to better

understand not just situational use, but long-term proficiency as well, caused "a shift in focus

toward the competence that underlies performance, rather than the performance itself" (p. 17).

They acknowledged that this shift was not a simple one however. First, it has long been

recognized that competence is not an easy thing to measure; the easiest way being some sort of

language performance measurement. Second, given the typical features which characterize L2

user's linguistic speech performance, variability is to be completely expected. In the case of SAT

which focuses on identifying the social variables, specifically the interlocutor, it then becomes

more difficult to know if the linguistic variation observed was conscious and intentional or

simply a 'slip-up.' Likewise, one has to question the fact that in linguistic divergence, it seems

to have been assumed that the speaker possesses the correct linguistic feature (competence),

whatever it may be, yet selectively chooses when to use it (performance), depending on whether

or not he or she seeks approval from their interlocutor.

In an attempt to address this matter, Beebe and Giles differentiate between what they call

adding to and using one's linguistic repertoire. First, linguistic repertoire is defined as "the

speaker's competence in the language [;] it refers to the presence or absence of linguistic

knowledge under a speaker's command" (1984, p. 19). In the case of using one's repertoire the

learner is 'linguistically independent' in that he does not rely on other's speech input to

accommodate; he is competent and can therefore choose when to "imitate or ignore" a specific

feature of the TL. Rampton's example of divergence among the young Pakistani students is an

example of this. Adding to one's repertoire on the other hand involves various factors,

biological, cognitive, psychological and social and is dependent on speech input from others.

Adding to is similar to convergence in that the speaker adopts new linguistic features as a means of fitting in. While it is questionable whether or not adding to is synonymous to acquisition, it seems undeniable that if we consider FLLs and 2LLs and the underlying principles of SAT, it is feasible that a desire to identify with speakers of the TL could serve as motivation for learners to add linguistic features from that speech community to their own repertoire. It is important to note here that convergence may not necessarily be toward grammatically or phonetically correct linguistic features. It depends obviously on who the speaker is trying to identify with and the way that that particular group speaks.

Another contender of SAT is studies that have demonstrated cases in which the learners gravitate towards and predominantly use a linguistic feature that is grammatically correct, but not commonly used by L1 speakers of the language. Take for example the work of Zvereva (1979) and Todeva (1985). In a study of 'highly proficient' Bulgarian and Russian English speakers it was noted that the speakers rarely used attributive infinitives, opting instead to use relative clauses, a linguistic choice contrary to that of English L1 speakers. This example illustrates "deviations from the *norm* but not the *system* of the target language," system being defined as "the potential, i.e., the entire arsenal or grammatical and acceptable units in a language" and norm being "the way in which native speakers of the language actually make use of this potential" (Todeva, 1992, p. 221). This contradicts SAT which would propose deviation *toward* the norm, whatever that norm may be.

To conclude, SAT captures the delicate relationship between how variables in the social setting, the interlocutor specifically, influence psychological and cognitive processes which in turn help or hinder development. While it is a concept still new to SLA, given the increased interest in *interaction approach* and acceptance of social context as contributing to, or at least as

some would say, facilitating learning, it seems a promising avenue to explore. In thinking specifically about my students this theory offers one possible explanation as to why once students transition to university classes, they seem to make significant progress, moving past what I would describe as months of little development forward.

The Acculturation Model and Social Distance

It is impossible to discuss the social factors traditionally attached to fossilization without mentioning Schumann's social distance hypothesis (1976) and acculturation model (1978). Although these theories have undergone criticism, primarily that there have been learners who seem to develop quite well despite having some negative feelings toward the target language group and or culture (Long, 1990), they were two of the first models to take into account social context and have remained enduring theories in the field.

These models were based off of data collected from the case study of Alberto, a 33-year-old Costa Rican immigrant living in the United States who during a previous ten-month longitudinal study of second language acquisition, exhibited very little development. Compared with the progress made by the five other participants of the initial study, Alberto's English remained simplified, resembling a pidgin language in that it was "characterized by a lack of inflectional morphology and a tendency to eliminate grammatical transformations" (Schumann, 1976, p. 120). It was just this that compelled Schumann to ask why, thus resulting in the acculturation model and social distance hypothesis, both of which are still key theories used to offer insight into the language learning experience of immigrants living in second language settings.

Schumann's acculturation model posits that:

Second language acquisition is just one aspect of acculturation and the degree to which a

learner acculturates to the target-language group will control the degree to which he

acquires the second language. (as cited in Ellis, 2015, p. 207)

Likewise, the degree of acculturation will be dictated by the level of social distance between

members of the target language group and the learner. Social distance asks the questions:

In relation to the TL group is the 2LL group politically, culturally, technically or

economically dominant, non-dominant, or subordinate? Is the integration pattern of the

2LL group assimilation, acculturation or preservation? What is the 2LL group's degree

of enclosure? Is the 2LL group cohesive? What is the size of the 2LL group? Are the

cultures of the two groups congruent? What are the attitudes of the two groups toward

each other? What is the 2LL group's intended length of residence in the target language

area? (Schumann, 1976, pp. 121-122)

According to the model it is the answer to these questions which will determine a learner's

environment as being either 'good' or 'bad' and which ultimately decides the proficiency

reached. In the case of Alberto, the social distance was deemed as being high and the learning

environment bad. Schumann pointed out that compared to four of the other participants who

were children of upper-middle class professionals, Alberto belonged to the socially inferior

working class of immigrants. Likewise, he exhibited social behaviors which could be classified

under acculturation or assimilation and he lived in a community with primarily other Spanish

speakers a fact which lent itself to having a high level of enclosure and cohesiveness within the

2LL community.

It is important to note that in the initial study of the six participant's language

development, the learners received no formal instruction in English grammar. The specific

linguistic features studied were the use of negatives, questions and auxiliaries. In addition to

leading Schumann to question why Alberto displayed such insignificant progression, the findings of the study also enticed Schumann to investigate whether or not these structures could be acquired via intense formal instruction. Focusing specifically on negation, Alberto underwent a seven-month intervention from which speech samples were obtained and analyzed. Comparing samples taken from spontaneous speech versus answers given in a formal task following the instruction revealed that "instruction only influenced Alberto's production in a test-like, highly monitored situation; it did not affect his spontaneous speech which he used for normal communication" (Schumann, 1976, p. 128). Regarding social distance, Schumann concluded that "instruction is evidently not powerful enough to overcome the pidginization engendered by social and psychological distance" (1976, p. 128).

Given the type of language learner that the acculturation model and social distance theory seek to describe, these theories are not applicable to my specific student population. That said, if one looks at the classroom as a microcosm of the environment beyond, Gardner's socio-educational model may offer some fruitful insight into the learning and non-learning of EAP students in the US. One of the key components of the socio-educational model is that a learner's level of motivation is closely related to his or her attitudes toward the learning environment, such as the teacher, content and classmates and that these sentiments would dictate how successful a learner would be in their endeavors.

<div align="center">Interactive Feedback and Interactive Needs Satisfaction:
Two Classic Hypotheses</div>

Keeping in mind the proposition that the social, psychological and cognitive forces of language learning and non-learning are all connected, and my specific desire to explore the differences which naturally occur when students exit the classroom, the next area I was interested in exploring in relation to my own student population was the role of interactive feedback.

Specifically, I was interested in how changes in social setting, the interlocutor in particular, might affect student's attitudes about receiving corrective feedback. For instance, could negative feelings associated with being corrected by a native speaker cause an L2 learner to pay more attention when interacting with native speakers of the TL, thus producing more native-like IL? Likewise, could the emphasis that I had placed on communicative competence, and in creating a safe learning environment have left students feeling little need to self-monitor or use feedback to repair? After all, Selinker (1972) did claim that extreme relaxation was one of the circumstances under which learners will 'backslide.'

It will come as no surprise that Tarone has argued that learner's do in fact respond to input such as corrective feedback differently depending on their interlocutor. Again, borrowing from sociolinguistics, she refers to Bell's Style Axiom (1984) which states that in the case of L1:

> Attention, or noticing, is a construct that bridges the cognitive (attention is a cognitive process) and the social (attention is differentially directed by social factors). It is not a root cause; rather, it is the speaker's responsiveness to the social relationship among speakers that causes attention to shift. (as cited in Tarone, 2006, p. 159)

Also, as has been stated earlier, in making her claim about the interconnectedness between the social, psychological and cognitive, Tarone (2007) proposed that two of the most important connections between social setting and acquisition are what type of feedback learners receive, adjusted input or corrective feedback, and how corrective feedback is processed.

One such way to test whether corrective feedback received in one social context is more conducive to language development than another is to compare findings from studies aimed at analyzing student's attitudes and responses to being corrected in three different settings: by a teacher, a classmate, and a native-speaker outside of class.

Before reviewing these studies however, it is important to comment on how interactive feedback has traditionally been tied to language learning and non-learning. The work of Vigil and Oller (1976) on this topic has been particularly influential for two reasons. First, in the name of fossilization they were among the first to acknowledge that in attempting to explain fossilization one should take into account, not just *errors*, but also "the fossilization of correct forms that conform to the target language norms" (p. 283). Secondly, they proposed that fossilization is pragmatically determined through interaction between a source and an audience. More specifically, they claimed that it is what they referred to as the 'feedback loop', the reactions and responses which occur during interaction, that most contribute to IL development or fossilization. On this they wrote:

> As long as some *non-excessive* corrective feedback is available to prod the learner to continue to modify attempts to express himself in the target language, it is predictable that the learner's grammatical system will continue to develop. If the corrective feedback (whether self-generated or provided by the learner's interlocutors) drops below some minimal level or disappears altogether, the grammar, or the rules no longer attended by corrective feedback, will tend to fossilize. Thus, correct forms or any forms that elicit favorable feedback will tend to fossilize. (Vigil and Oller, 1976, p. 284-285)

To explore this hypothesis, titled *rule fossilization*, Vigil and Oller distinguish between affective and cognitive meaning in interaction. Affective is subjective and emotional and is often characterized by gestures and facial expressions; it shows how one feels about the interaction. Cognitive meaning on the other hand is more objective and factual and is expressed through language. They also categorize feedback into three categories, positive, negative and neutral.

Then, using those variables in conjunction with one another they describe nine possible feedback outcomes.

The first that is of importance is the result of receiving positive feedback at both the affective and cognitive levels. On one hand, this combination is positive because it encourages the speaker to continue. It can become disadvantageous because if the grammatical forms being used are incorrect, the learner has no indication of it and will not attempt to modify their IL output; thus, potentially leading to fossilization.

The second significant prediction was the case of positive affective feedback and negative cognitive feedback. This is where learning could potentially take place because the learner is explicitly informed that his or her message was not clear yet is still encouraged affectively to continue trying to convey their message. In other words, in this scenario, the speaker will modify their output, presumably preventing fossilization.

This notion has since been adopted by others in the field. White (1987) for example, argued that it's not comprehensible input, but rather incomprehensible input that is necessary for L2 progression. She maintained that "modifications to language (triggered by something incomprehensible) become the impetus for learners to recognize the inadequacy of their own rule system" (as cited in Gass, Mackey, & Pica, 1998, p. 301).

The last three combinations which merit some comment and may come in useful for later discussion are those which consist of negative feedback on the affective and cognitive plane. It is these situations which "are most apt to result in the abortion of future attempts to communicate" (Vigil and Oller, 1976, p. 288).

In 1979, Selinker and Lamendella put out an article which was a direct response to Vigil and Oller's 1976 proposition of rule fossilization. In this article, Selinker and Lamendella

challenge various components of Vigil and Oller's model and present their own theory on the

principle source of fossilization- interactive needs satisfaction. It is important to note, that while

Selinker and Lamendella and Vigil and Oller's models do differ, there are core commonalities

that can be found.

To understand better the arguments made against Vigil and Oller, let us first look at the

general claim of rule fossilization that Selinker and Lamendella use as a reference. According to

Selinker and Lamendella, Vigil and Oller's main point was that:

> It is the point at which the learner begins to receive 'predominantly' positive expected
>
> feedback in reaction to his or her attempts to exchange information which directly
>
> controls the point at which any linguistic rule tends to stabilize. (Selinker & Lamendella,
>
> 1979, p. 365)

Playing off of this notion, Selinker and Lamendella critique the deterministic, definitive

nature of the model in which receiving predominantly positive expected feedback "ipso facto

prompts the stabilization of the rules in question" (1979, p. 367). According to Selinker and

Lamendella this view was lacking because it failed to account for the myriad intrinsic learner

characteristics that contribute to IL learning. They argued that this *one* prerequisite alone

couldn't possibly determine the onset of fossilization.

In regard specifically to the term positive expected feedback they make the claim that it is

impossible to know whether or not learners actually have "conscious or unconscious

'expectancies' about the 'likely reaction' of the 'audience' to his or her linguistic productions"

(Selinker & Lamendella, 1979, pp. 365-366). Furthering this argument, they commented that

there are undoubtedly instances in which the learner may pay no attention at all to the feedback,

and equally compelling, the fact that if the learner is aware of some sort of miscommunication, it may not be clear *what* aspect of his attempted speech production was inadequate.

It was stated earlier that Selinker and Lamendella could not agree to the fact that Vigil and Oller's model omitted the role of intrinsic learner characteristics. One such important characteristic, which will vary in degree depending on individual learners and the situation they are in, is their interactive needs satisfaction. In other words, as described by Selinker and Lamendella:

> A learner who wants or needs very little from the TL speakers might find his or her IL adequate at the point when only 20% of positive expected feedback on the "cognitive" dimension was received. Another learner, one with greater needs and/or aspirations, could conceivably be content only at the point when 80% of positive expected feedback is received. (1979, p. 366)

And so, it was, that interactive needs satisfaction was declared by Selinker and Lamendella as being the primary contributor to the onset of fossilization. This belief follows suit with ideas originally put forth by Selinker (1972). In the seminal piece "Interlanguage" where the terms interlanguage and fossilization were first introduced, Selinker proposed that one of the central processes involved in fossilization is strategies of second-language communication, communicative needs satisfaction being one. Using the work of Coulter (1968) as support, Selinker explains that "this strategy of communication dictates to [learners], internally as it were, that they know enough of the TL in order to communicate," and that this is when learning ceases (1972, p. 217). He does point out that the learner may continue to progress at some level, such as vocabulary acquisition however, which is a valid point because it speaks to the question of whether or not it is possible for a learner to fossilize in some domains but continue in others.

As can be seen, Selinker and Lamendella do not completely dismiss the role of extrinsic feedback as is outlined by Vigil and Oller, but they take this line of thought further, pointing out that predominantly positive expected feedback is subjective and cannot be measured at a global level. The degree to which a learner feels satisfied with the feedback received from their audience is an individual and intrinsic process that will vary from learner to learner and it is this fact, interactive needs satisfaction, which contributes to the lower bound of fossilization.

<div align="center">Corrective Feedback in Practice:
A Summary of Three Studies</div>

Since Vigil and Oller, the role of interactive feedback in SLA has continued to be a debate for those in the field, not so much about how it pertains to fossilization, but rather as it pertains to learning. Corrective feedback has broadly been defined by Hattie and Timperley (2007) as "information provided on aspects of learner's performance" (as cited in Kaivanpanah, Alavi, & Sepehrinia, 2015, p. 74). Traditionally, corrective feedback has been assigned as the teacher's role, but more recently, with the social turn of the 1990s, which proposed that learning occurs through social interactions, more emphasis has been placed on exploring the effectiveness of corrective feedback from peers.

While Mackey and Gass (2006) have deemed interactional feedback important for learning because it allows learners to take note of the gap between their IL and the TL, others, like Truscott (1999) have pointed out that corrective feedback on learner's speech production does not facilitate language development. He argues that corrective feedback is generally not effective because it can interrupt the flow of classroom activities, may cause discomfort for learners, may be ambiguous, and is often not taken seriously. From this list one can see similarities to the claims that Selinker and Lamendella made against Vigil and Oller's model. On the other hand, Lyster, Lightbrown and Spada (1999) found these claims to lack validity stating

that when brief and direct, as in the form of recasts, corrective feedback does not interrupt classroom activities; moreover, they maintained that learners do not have negative sentiments about receiving corrective feedback and that in fact, they expect it.

In the past much of the research surrounding corrective feedback has occupied itself with identifying what types of feedback there are, which ones are used most commonly, which ones appear to be the most effective and how factors such as the learner's proficiency and timing of feedback affect how useful it is. The authors of the first study, Kaivanpanah et al., point out that "what types of oral corrective feedback learners prefer, focusing on what areas of language, when and by whom (teachers and/or peers) has rarely been addressed in detail in existing studies" and thus the purpose of the first study was to do just that (2015, p. 74). This is relevant to my own inquiries in that their questions looked to better understand learner's attitudes and preferences about being corrected during interactions, and if these attitudes change depending on *who* does the correcting. It is also important to note that this study was conducted in part as a means to encourage and promote the effectiveness of pair/group work on learning to a community which had historically favored teacher-centered classrooms.

The participants of the study were 200 Iranian EFL students ranging from beginning level to proficient. The students were chosen from eight different private language centers and varied between ages 13 and 40 with the majority being between 20 and 30. There were 25 teachers involved, all Iranian and all having at least two years teaching experience. Most of the teachers held master's degrees in teaching or English.

The instruments used to gather data from teachers and students were a questionnaire with 36 questions, a brief informal follow-up conversation with students and a semi-structured half hour interview with the teachers. The questionnaire followed a Likert scale with 1 meaning

strongly disagree and 5 meaning strongly agree. The questions themselves were aimed at

indicating preferences about the student's and teacher's preferences about feedback (type,

timing, peer or teacher) and the follow-up discussions with students were meant to be a

designated time for students to explain why they preferred one type of feedback to the other and

how they felt when corrected by their peers and teachers. The interview was only conducted

with ten of the twenty-five teachers and sought to explore what advantages and disadvantages the

teachers associated with different types of feedback and what factors influenced their personal

choices regarding corrective feedback in class. For the purpose of this study the two types of

feedback asked about were recasts and elicitation as these were the two forms most commonly

used in the classes and therefore the most familiar to the students.

The first finding that is of relevance to the particular topic of this paper was that despite

the teacher's trepidations, students generally indicated that they supported peer feedback (3.83)

and felt that learning was enhanced by it (3.77). Likewise, it was encouraging to see that for the

most part students expressed confidence in their peer's ability to correct their errors (3.37), and

also that they felt that there were times when their peers knew more than them (3.5). What was

interesting was that while overall students indicated very positive attitudes towards peer

feedback, there was a general tendency for students to indicate a preference for feedback on

grammar to come from the teacher (3.28). Similarly, the number of students who responded that

they wanted teacher reinforcement of the grammar points that were corrected by their peers was

high, at (4.08).

In moving to the teacher's responses, it was clear to see that first of all, teachers tended to

be leerier of using peer feedback than students and second, that many of the concerns voiced by

the teachers mimicked the critiques that have been made about corrective feedback in general

and which were listed earlier on. "For example, 55.5% of the teachers felt that peer feedback could cause learners to feel humiliated compared with 25.7% of learners" and furthermore, students felt that their peer's attempts to correct their mistakes were sincere (3.75) (Kaivanpanah et al., 2015, p. 82).

Shedding more light on this topic, the authors share specific thoughts collected from the interviews with teachers. For instance, some teachers were concerned that for fear of *losing face,* students may become resistant to feedback given by peers and begin to develop negative feelings about how their peers correct them. Other teachers brought up the interesting point that students who often correct others may begin to be seen as *showing off,* a fact which could cause other students to be reluctant to take their advice even if it were correct. This thought process was, as pointed out early, contrary to student's beliefs who reported that peer interaction did not result in negative affective emotions.

Similarly, in response to questions about attitudes towards immediate corrective feedback teachers again conveyed concerns about student's self-esteem and jeopardizing the flow of the task or activity at hand. Kaivanpanah et al., concluded that:

> The teachers seemed to be more concerned than the learners with the potentially negative emotional aspects of learning; all the teachers interviewed expressed their concern for learners' self-esteem and believed that immediate feedback interrupted the flow of interaction and was likely to embarrass students. (2015, p. 87)

While there were some limitations to this study, primarily the fact that it is culturally bound and that the positive feelings which students indicated in regard to peer feedback could have been skewed by the fact that their classroom sizes were so small (12 people) that members of the class had an unusually high comfort level with one another, this study is still important in

that it discredits some of the principal anxieties that teachers identify about using corrective feedback. Though this study doesn't exactly focus on how corrective feedback impacts language learning outcomes, it does point to the importance of teachers knowing their student's preferences about corrective feedback so as to best facilitate learning for them. Finally, I end this summary with a thought that caught my attention as it directly relates to my own ponderings on how the effectiveness of corrective feedback might depend on who it comes from. During one of the teacher interviews a teacher posited:

> Learners pay more attention to peer feedback than teacher feedback because they want to see if their classmates are providing the correct form of their erroneous utterance and even want to see if they [their peers] are right about the erroneousness of their utterance. (cited in Kaivanpanah et al., 2015, p. 89)

Kaivanpanah et al., reflect on this statement concluding that "it may well be that when learners know that they are going to be corrected by their friends, they may be more inclined to learn and not to repeat their previous errors" (2015, p. 89).

Whereas Kaivanapah et al., were interested in comparing teacher and student's beliefs about corrective feedback (teacher and peer), Sato (2013) aimed at comparing the perceptions students have about corrective peer feedback before and after participating in a ten-week peer feedback intervention. For this study Sato used 36 Japanese university students all enrolled in a mandatory English as a foreign language class. Students were noted as having strong foundations in English grammar but lacked communicative ability likely because communicative competence was not stressed within their educational system. The group was broken into four groups, one receiving instruction on peer interaction only, one on peer interaction and recasts, one on peer interaction and prompts, and the last group being the control group.

The pre and post-test consisted of 27 questions on a Likert-scale ranging from 1 to 6, 1 being strongly disagree and 6 being strongly agree. The questions were in Japanese and were intended to learn about how effective the students perceived peer interaction and peer feedback to be for their learning, how comfortable they felt about giving and receiving it and what methods they favored. The intervention itself lasted for ten-weeks and followed a typical preparation, practice and expansion sequence that took place completely in English. The teachers were both males, one being American and the other, Sato himself, Japanese. Classes were held once a week for 90 minutes and involved large amounts of group work in which students were permitted to speak Japanese so as to allow them to express themselves well. To conclude the study, Sato performed a semi-structured, one-hour interview with each student as a means to gain a better understanding of the information revealed in the questionnaires.

The findings of the study bear resemblance to those of Kaivanpanah et al., in that even before the feedback intervention there was a clear tendency towards students wanting to be corrected. Likewise, many of the apprehensions that students expressed about giving corrective feedback to their peers were the same as those of the teachers discussed in the first article despite the differences in their roles and cultural context. In the interviews it was found that the students "generally expressed their concern about breaking the flow of communication and hurting their partner's feelings" (Sato, 2013, p. 622). However, Sato points out that despite this general consensus, when students were later asked if in fact corrective feedback of either type, recast or prompt, did interrupt the flow of interaction, most answered that it did not and that they were able to continue their conversation easily.

Another inconsistency revealed by the study was that while students generally responded favorably to the statement, *if my classmate points out my grammar errors, I would believe the correction* (4), they felt less confident about their own ability to correct others. The statements *when my classmate makes an error, I can point it out* and *when my classmate makes an error, I can provide a correction* (3). Even though scores for the latter items were comparatively lower, it was exactly these two question items that changed the most after the feedback intervention. This is important because it shows that while students have positive feelings about exchanging peer feedback, they doubt their own ability to do so and could therefore benefit from some sort of structured instruction and practice.

Interviews also showed that when it came to corrective feedback, students commented often on who they were paired with. For instance, Sato explains that "there were learners who said they did not enjoy speaking with quiet classmates," and others who felt intimidated working with peers they perceived as being more communicatively competent. One student for example said "sometimes, there are students who can speak English, right? When this happens, I feel guilty to work with her" (as cited in Sato, 2013, p. 619-620). Similarly, Yoshida (2008) found in her work with university students of Japanese, that the effectiveness of peer corrective feedback "depends on the learners' level of satisfaction with their interaction…specifically, when learners were dissatisfied, feedback from their classmates was misunderstood or discarded" (cited in Sato, 2013, p. 613). This insight speaks to the importance of consideration for classroom dynamics and group work. Sato points out that peer interaction and the feedback that occurs during it are susceptible to the varying social relationships between learners and that this can be a point of weakness if not taken into account by the teacher.

Going back to the overarching question of whether or not learners experience varying degrees of pressure to speak correctly depending on who their audience is, the interviews again were insightful. According to Sato, the qualitative data confirmed previous work (Gass & Varonis, 1989; Sato & Lyster, 2007) which concluded that students are in fact more comfortable interacting with peers than teachers, and that further, it explains why: "they feel they do not need to worry about making errors when interacting with their classmates" (Sato, 2013, p. 619). In other words, their affective filters are lowered. While many would believe that this is a good thing, it should also be asked if perhaps students being too comfortable can cause a decrease in self-monitoring and/or the notion of interactive needs satisfaction to manifest itself in the learner's language development.

While it appears that students generally feel more comfortable interacting with students than the teacher, and that in both cases they claim they do want to be corrected (in spite of both teacher and peer's fears of embarrassing them), not much research has been done at all regarding corrective feedback between NSs and NNSs outside of the classroom. It would stand to reason, that psychologically one may feel more stress when interacting with NSs, especially if the learner seeks identity within the NSs language, because the person is a NS who, as much as the learner sees anyways, does not make mistakes. If this is true, could a heightened affective filter cause learners to self-monitor more, so as to avoid making mistakes and potentially being corrected in social settings? Moreover, are learners more receptive to corrective feedback which happens outside of the class? If so, could this be a function of feeling slightly embarrassed and not wanting to make the same mistake again?

In his article, Sato references an argument made by van Lier (1988). In response to the wealth of literature illustrating teacher's apprehensions of using corrective feedback at the

learner's psychological expense van Lier, and later Seedhouse (1997) claim that "language learners in classrooms are not ordinary people in real-life situations who might find it insulting to be corrected" (as cited in Sato, 2013, p. 613). This point would certainly suggest that learners may in fact find it uncomfortable to be corrected outside of the classroom but could this in fact influence the learner's language development?

Whereas studies regarding how learners actually feel when corrected by classmates and teachers is scarce, the psychological impact of corrective feedback *outside* of the class is even scarcer. Like the research that has been done on corrective feedback that takes place in the classroom, the work on corrective feedback between NSs and NNSs during interactions outside of the classroom has generally focused on whether or not NSs do in fact correct the learners and if so what and how do they correct? Chun, Day, Chenoweth and Luppescu (1982) are among the few to delve into these exact questions.

This particular study, which was one of a series exploring error correction between NSs and NNSs, served specifically to assess if NSs would correct their NNS friends during informal conversation, and if so, how often and which types of errors? The participants included 28 NNSs who were studying at one of three different EAP programs in Hawaii and whose levels ranged from beginner to advanced. The method was quite simple; NNSs who stated that they did have NS friends whom they could converse with outside of class were given a tape-recorder and were presented with the task of recording a 15-20-minute conversation outside of class on a topic of their own choosing. Afterwards, participants were also asked to record the dialogue that took place while they and their NS partner/partners played a communicative description game. The purpose was two-fold in that it offered a common variable among all pairings which may show

some similarities, and, it allowed the team to observe differences between a completely 'free'

conversation and one which was predetermined.

In total over 15 hours of conversation was recorded, and the results showed that only

8.9% of errors were in fact corrected by the NSs. For the purpose of the study, *error* was defined

as "the use of a linguistic item in a way, which, according to fluent users of the language,

indicates faulty or incomplete learning." Of equal importance, correction is defined as when "the

NS, in response to what is perceived to be an error by the NNS, supplied an appropriate item

(Chun et al., 1982, p. 538). Errors were divided into five separate categories: errors of discourse,

lexicon, syntax, omission and those that contradicted fact and were tallied according to how

often they occurred and how often they were corrected by the NS. Significantly, only the errors

which received corrective feedback in the next speech turn were counted as error correction.

Before looking at those results it is necessary to note first that overall, only 8.9% of

NNS's errors were corrected. Chun et al., viewed this number as being appropriate, pointing out

that "if it were to go even as high as 25%, there would be so much talk which would be only

marginally related to the on-going topic that cohesive conversation would be difficult, if not

impossible" (1982, p. 542).

Of the five categories, errors that challenged fact were the errors which were committed

the least often (19) but corrected the most (17), at an 89.5% correction rate. The second type

corrected most often was discourse errors at 35%. The authors describe this type of error as

using inappropriate openings, closings, and or refusals, changing topics abruptly or even failing

to provide a response when typically, a NS would. An interesting point Chen et al., make is that

despite the grammatical/syntactical errors that might be present in an utterance, it is the

'discourse violation' which will yield correction.

The category ranking the third highest was word choice. 15% of these errors were corrected, and while that number may appear low, it is substantially higher than errors of syntax and omission, 7% and 2.5% respectively. In the case of vocabulary, the team also took count of the number of times the learner was searching for a word, later provided by the NS, or explicitly requested help with word retrieval. These numbers were 38 and 51 respectively, and if accounted for in the number of word choice corrections, would raise the number from 15% to 25.8%.

When doing this study, one of the underlying questions for Chen et al., was how the data collected could be carried back to what happens in language learning classrooms. From the findings they concluded that two important areas of language proficiency which merit consideration in the class are vocabulary and "the teaching of the discoursal properties of English to NNSs" (p. 543). Granted the date of the article, it remains true that allowing interaction with various types of vocabulary and styles of discourse are areas which may be over-deserving but under-addressed given the possible constraints of the context at hand.

To conclude this section, it is important to note that while the interaction approach and all of its key constructs such as input, mediation, negotiation, feedback and output are in fact social in the sense that they naturally arise out of interaction, the thought that the social setting as in who the interlocutor is, might play a role in acquisition is still met with doubt. Gass et al., for example warn that:

> Although interaction may provide a structure that allows input to become salient and hence noticed, interaction should not be seen as a cause of acquisition; it can only set the scene for potential learning. (1998, p. 305)

The one piece of information which ties directly with my initial inquiry for this section is that while it has been reported that students are often unclear of their teacher's corrective intentions with feedback, Chun et al. revealed that NNSs caught 66% of the corrective feedback supplied by NSs. Given this is only one study, generalizations can't be made. However, this would indicate that for some reason, possibly that learners pay more attention to NSs *outside* of the classroom, the learners were much more in tune to the feedback provided. Whether or not students experience more pressure to *perform* with NSs for fear of being corrected by them is a question that research has yet to answer, but that may prove to be insightful in understanding differences between language use in, and outside of the classroom.

Teaching Implications

Regarding classroom discourse two themes have emerged. Firstly, if students do not possess the skills necessary to communicate in both formal and informal registers, they may be forced to use their L1 during certain speaking situations, even if they would like to use their L2 and secondly, that discoursal properties which help students during speech acts such as changing the topic and making requests are sometimes neglected in the classroom. This is important because as we saw in the Chun et al., discourse errors are among the first to be corrected by NSs.

Before even looking at the discourse level, it is important to note that even at the sentence level, the input which students receive from teachers is non-reflective of real life. Take, for example, the work of Swain (1991). In this study of teacher talk in early immersion classes she found that teachers tended to predominantly use the linguistic structures which were being taught therefore limiting student's opportunities for natural exposure to other forms. Swain commented that:

The use of different verb forms was extraordinarily skewed. Over 75% of the verbs used

were in the present or imperative. Only about 15% of verbs used by the teachers were in

the past tense, 6% in the future tense and 3% in the conditional.

(as cited in Han, 2004, p. 152)

This shows that as teachers we may sometimes think it advantageous to simplify our language, or

to intentionally use the forms that are the content of the lesson, but that this deviation from how

we normally speak may work to our student's disadvantage.

At the discourse level, I draw from an example of Tarone and Swain (1995). Upon

studying adolescents in French immersion classes, it was found that students would switch to

English to partake in informal conversation. One of the participants in fact stated:

when…[we] get older… we start speaking in a way that they don't teach us, in French,

how to speak. So, I don't know if it's slang or just the way kids speak…I speak

differently to my friends than I do to my parents. It's almost a whole different language,

and…they don't teach us how to speak [French] that way. (cited in Tarone, 2012, p. 838)

Similarly, in the same article, Tarone refers to the international teaching assistants who were

found by Selinker and Douglas (1985) to possess more communicative competence, in both

accuracy and fluency, "in lecturing on their academic field than when talking about an everyday

topic like favorite foods or bicycling" (as cited in Tarone, 2007, p. 838). What these examples

illustrate is that despite the agendas that our curriculum may dictate, it is still necessary to equip

students with the type of casual discourse they might partake in outside of the classroom.

One such way to allow students this range in discourse domains is to set up a

conversation partners program. Particularly in EAP settings where students will likely be

continuing on in the United States, conversation partners could be an excellent way to gently

push students to begin interacting with other students, NSs, who attend the university. Likewise, in this particular context teachers could also design tasks which would require students to leave the classroom and communicate with NSs on campus or in the community. In the case of EFL settings, Tarone and Bayley (2011) acknowledge that the tools available for encouraging various discourse domains are not as readily available but offer role-plays and the use of sitcoms as possible options.

Speaking to the fact that students are sometimes unable to navigate what Chun et al. described as discoursal properties, more attention should also be given to helping students navigate small talk, change topics, make requests and appropriately acknowledge what others have said. Some communication strategies proposed by Hatch (1978) are:

Practice in nominating topics predicting questions for topics [which might arise in casual conversation], listening for WH-words, using devices such as clarification requests, using fillers to show the conversation is being understood, and knowing how to recycle topics. (as cited in Chun et al., 1982, p. 543)

While discourse style and discoursal properties do not address grammatical accuracy, it is important to note that these are linguistic areas which NSs take note of and also which allow students to feel like confident users of their L2. On this note, informal language such as idioms and slang are also extremely important areas of language which help students to shape their identity and feel like valid members of the TL community. With my own students I certainly notice that it is rarely my grammar that they take note of, ask questions about and later use in the hallway in conversation with friends, but rather the colloquial words and expressions such as *sit tight*, *touch base* and *kinda*.

Regarding giving corrective feedback to students it appears that teacher's fears of potentially embarrassing students or of interrupting the flow of the class activity is highly contradictory to how students actually feel about having their errors corrected. Studies have shown repeatedly that students do in fact feel that corrective feedback is critical to their learning process and generally would like to be corrected more often (Schulz, 1996; Cathcart and Olsen, 1976; Brown, 2009). One point Sato took note of in his study was that although the participants in his study were aware that their speaking skills were lacking (as in general communicative competence and fluency), they were unaware that they "would make simple grammatical mistakes until they were given [corrective feedback]" (2013, p. 622). Equally important is that as Chun et al. discovered, students do not often receive corrective feedback on syntax from NSs outside of the classroom making it even more important for teachers to do so when in class.

It seems that where teacher's apprehensions are validated is in their concern about whether or not students are actually aware of when they are being provided with corrective feedback. Referencing the work of Roberts (1995) and Mackey et al. (2000) who sought to explore the effectiveness of corrective feedback, Han (2004) points out that:

In theory, corrective feedback is meant to draw learners' attention to gaps between the TL input and their interlanguage output but in reality, learners often fail to notice or misinterpret the corrective intent of the feedback provided. (p. 150)

What this information indicates for teachers is that their system needs to be made clear to students and that students should be afforded the opportunity to share their personal preferences about it because as Schulz (1996) contends, "there is likely to be an interaction between learner's preferences and the effectiveness of different feedback approaches" (as cited in Kaivanpanah et al., 2015, p. 78).

To make the intent of corrective feedback clearer, it has been suggested that "some sort of attention-getting mechanism be built in the feedback process" in order to help learner's take the correction for what it really is (Han, 2004, p. 150). Nassaji (2007) seconds that notion stating that "when interactional feedback is combined with emphasis or additional prompts [raising intonation, gestures], it might give the feedback more attentional focus and hence might make the learner more likely to notice the corrective purpose of the feedback" (as cited in Kaivanpanah et al., 2015, p. 77). Likewise, as was illustrated in Sato's work, another strategy that could prove useful in bolstering the effectiveness of corrective feedback is to actually devote a portion of time to having an open discussion about corrective feedback (teacher and peer) in which students are able to share their perceptions and preferences and in which the teacher is able to model various forms and allow students to practice using them with one another. In Sato's Japanese context, one student for example stated the she felt uncomfortable supplying corrective feedback because she felt it would be rude and contrary to Japanese cultural norms. This clearly shows that one's perception about giving and receiving corrective feedback is influenced by their culture, but that with a little open classroom discussion, students are capable of seeing the advantages it can deliver when used in a systematic manner.

Another classroom concern that the contents of this paper have alluded to is the long-standing form vs. meaning debate. The argument against instruction which values accuracy over fluency of course, is that it prevents students from expressing themselves freely and that it doesn't allow for an open flow of conversation. Designing interactions which obsess over the correct use of forms may produce students that are capable of speaking with grammatical accuracy, but who "usually find themselves at a loss when they need to use L2 in social settings outside the classroom" (Bayley and Tarone, 2011, p. 51). On the flip side, it has been

acknowledged by Williams (2001) that "when classroom learners engage in meaning-based interaction among themselves, 'they do not spontaneously attend to formal aspects of language very frequently or consistently" (as cited in Han, 2004, p. 134). Likewise, when students are praised by teachers for effectively conveying the meaning of their message, it is possible for their grammatical inaccuracies to be reinforced and potentially become stabilized as was predicted by Vigil and Oller and later supported by Higgs and Clifford (1982).

As seen above, meaning-based tasks and activities meet some opposition because research has shown that unless students are requested to focus on accuracy, they rarely do. One interesting thought which opposes this view is that of Foster and Ohta (2005). In a study focusing on peer interaction and corrective feedback they concluded that if the meaning of the message is clear, and the learning environment positive, "it is arguable that learners could thus have spare attention to give to form, both of their own and of their partner's language" (as cited in Kaivanpanah et al., 2015, p. 86). To conclude, it appears that a balance between form and meaning-based activities is most optimal for student's language development; furthermore, if the teacher is able to work with students to devise feedback strategies that are quick, clear and nonobtrusive, more attention to form could be given during meaning-based speaking tasks.

Considering that this work began with my interest in fossilization, it seems only fair to come full circle and comment specifically on this topic as it pertains to teachers. As I pointed out in the introduction, upon beginning my research I almost instantaneously came to the realization that by applying this word to my own student population I was making a dangerous and inaccurate assumption. Given the length of time it would realistically take to correctly assign this term, it was both unfair and hasty for me to have applied it to the learners I work with.

That said, it's not just the issue of time that has made me, and I believe many others, shy away

from using this word.

Much of the current discussion regarding fossilization deals with how it depicts language.

Under fossilization, language is seen as having an end-state, a TL that the learner is trying to

reach. It views language as a "monolithic, homogenous, idealized, static end-state competence"

instead of as the dynamic complex adaptive system that it is (cited in Han, 2006, p. 194). Cooper

(1999) wrote:

> After all, language is not a closed, entropic system. It does not settle down to a point
>
> of static equilibrium, unless, of course, it no longer has speakers. Instead, as with other
>
> naturally-occurring systems, language is dynamic, constantly evolving and self-
>
> organizing. (cited in Han, 2006, p. 195)

It's not just how fossilization frames language that can be disturbing but also the fact that it

denotes that as individuals, we stop developing linguistically. MacWhinney (1999) who

maintained that it is possible for learners to stabilize in some linguistic areas while continuing to

progress in others, also pointed out that "an individual's language resources are ever-mutable,

and their development continues, even development of the L1" (cited in Han, 2006, p. 195).

Lastly, though fossilization has been associated with both accurate and inaccurate stable

linguistic structures, it is more commonly viewed and referred to in light of *errors*. As a teacher,

the question I grapple with now is who dictates what is *right* and *wrong*? Is it the text book, the

teacher or the speech community? Likewise, I wonder, if one of the features of language is that

it is constantly evolving and one of the purposes to express individuality, can what one may

deem as an *error* in fact be a function of linguistic creativity to another?

Conclusion

In conclusion, while I was not always able to find exact answers for my questions, the various studies explored in relation to speech accommodation theory, the acculturation model, interactive feedback and interactive needs satisfaction all point to the questions posed as being valid. My questions regarding how social environment and student's desire to be an integrated member of that social environment influence language development have been the source of key constructs in SLA theory and have served as the crux for important studies in the field. While it has been argued by some that social setting should not be directly linked to either acquisition or fossilization and that both of the aforementioned are the result of cognitive processes, there is also a good deal of evidence showing that in fact social factors do play a role in L2 development. In the case of my students, and others who are in similar language learning situations, it would seem only natural that they possess different attitudes and motivations in different social contexts and that some contexts are more motivating than others causing them to pay more attention to either the speech patterns of those around them, as in speech accommodation theory, or to the interactive feedback which they receive.

Reflecting on this process, one take away for me is the possibility that my returning students are not speaking any more accurately at all, but rather that they are navigating the conversation more artfully and are comfortably incorporating idioms and expressions all of which make them appear to have made leaps and bounds linguistically. Concerning classroom instruction, one positive change I will adopt moving forward is to openly discuss student's preferences regarding corrective feedback and to correct students more often. Lastly, this work has brought me to the realization that it is not just student's grammatical errors that warrant attention and reparation. As a teacher of English for academic purposes I feel I had sometimes

devoted too much time and energy to grammatical accuracy, when in fact there were other

linguistic components which ultimately prove to be just as important for my student population

upon transitioning to a university setting.

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