

CONCEPTUAL OUTLINE

Digest

Adrienn Fekete is an assistant professor at the University of Pécs. She holds a PhD degree in English Applied Linguistics and Teaching TESOL/TEFL and a master's degree in English, History, and Hungarian-English Translation and Interpreting. In the framework of her master programs, she completed minors in Fine Arts and Theater.

A. Fekete's theoretical framework and her research findings shed light on four tenets of SLA.

1. She proposes that **language and culture are inherently interwoven in SLA**, because language is the product of a certain community reflecting the way they see the world through language.
2. She views language learning not in terms of attainment or proficiency level but **how transformative language learning is for learners and how meaningfully it is lived by them**. Consequently, **language learning is an embodied experience** because it triggers emotional responses in language learners irrespective of their proficiency levels.
3. Her research findings led her to coining a new term, the **language learner's imagined second language (L2) habitus** (Fekete, 2018) that casts light on how multilingual speakers (i.e. language learners) speak, act, and think differently in their different languages.
4. She regards learners' linguistic and cultural identities as a major individual difference in the psychology of the language learner. In this framework, she envisages **learners' identity construction as a complex dynamic system of individual differences**.

The four tenets of her research encompass three scope majors of the educational role of language (ERL)

- **Language and schooling** – Research into identity and individual differences in SLA is inherently linked to the various contexts and levels of education.
- **Language and culture** – Language and culture are inseparable in SLA, and the study of language or of language learners cannot be isolated from the cultural context of learners and that of the second language they are learning.
- **Language and personality** – personality is linked to language and SLA in two ways: 1) personality is an individual difference that affects language learning and 2) person-ality may be viewed as the person's identity in the micro-context of SLA and in the macro-context of education embedded in the larger context of culture and society.

The four tenets of her research correspond to all **four scope minors of the educational role of language**.

- **Language beliefs** – What learner's think about 1) their languages (e. g. perceived and measured language skills and proficiency level, learner beliefs about language learning etc.), 2) the psychological factors associated with SLA (e. g. their motivation, language aptitude, personality), and 3) the cultures associated with the languages they speak (including the people of these cultures, their way of life, their accent, and their country).
- **Language activity** – How language learners speak and act differently in their different languages (pointing out their imagined second language habitus).
- **Language affect** – Learners' emotional responses to SLA point out the embodied nature of language learning and language use, which, in turn, sheds light on the transformative potential of language.
- **Language matrices** – How language learners think about and perceive the world and themselves differently in and via the various languages they speak (also casting light on their imagined second language habitus).

Key words:

language and culture / linguistic identity / cultural identity / individual differences /the psychology of the language learner / complex dynamic systems theory / the language learner's imagined second language habitus / identity construction as a complex dynamic system of individual differences / affect / educational role of language / SLA / identity in education / the cultural identity model of SLA

Description

Adrienn Fekete's research encompasses three scope majors in the Educational Role of Language Framework including language and culture, language and personality, and language and schooling as well as all four scope minors.

[1] Language and Culture

Language and culture are inherently intertwined in SLA. Language is a cultural product, as it is created by the members of a cultural community. Therefore, language reflects the way people perceive the world, nature, and phenomena in the world in and via language. Consequently, speakers of different languages may see the world through different linguistic categories prescribed by their language. In the process of SLA, language learners do not only acquire different aspects of the language but also the various aspects of the culture that are embedded in the language as well as in the interactions they have had with the (native) speakers of the

language. The inseparable role of language and culture in SLA is associated with the weak version of linguistic relativity and the identity construction of multilingual speakers (language learners and teachers included).

Key findings:

- Since language and culture are inextricably linked in SLA, **language learning shapes learners' and teachers' linguistic and cultural identities.**
- Learners' linguistic identities point out various aspects of their self-perception related to learning and speaking a second language (L2) (language beliefs) in various contexts including but not limited to the context of education (language and schooling).
- **Learners' cultural identities reflect to what extent they identify with the cultures** they learn about or (wish to) belong to including their mother tongue culture(s) and the culture(s) of the second language they are learning (language and culture).
- Learners' identity construction sheds light on their **individual and their collective identities** pointing out how they are different from other language learners and, at the same time, how they belong to certain linguistic, cultural, and professional communities on the basis of similarity rather than difference (language and personality).
- A. Fekete adopted Sussman's (2002) cultural identity model of the sojourn in the context of SLA. Since language and culture are interwoven in SLA, exposure to SLA triggers different identity responses in learners' cultural identities. Fekete (2018) labels this process **'the cultural identity model of SLA'**.
- The scope of language and culture are inherently linked to all four scope minors: 1) beliefs about languages and cultures, 2) language activities – how learners speak and behave when using different languages and when interacting with people coming from various cultures (e. g. native speakers of a foreign language), 3) language affect – how learners respond emotionally to learning a new language and the culture(s) associated with the language, and 4) language matrices – how learners see themselves and the world differently in and via different languages.

Issue further elaborated in:

Fekete, A. (2020). A Case Study on the Second Language Socialization and Enculturation Experiences of Advanced Learners of English from the Perspective of Language Ecology. In Fekete, A. & Lehmann, M. & Simon, K. (Eds.). *UPRT 2015: Empirical Studies in English Applied Linguistics in Honour of József Horváth* (pp. 143-161). Pécs: Lingua Franca Csoport

Fekete, A. (2018). *Exploring advanced English learners' multilingual identity construction from multiple perspectives*. (Doctoral dissertation, University of Pécs).

Sussman, N. M. (2002). Sojourners to another country: The psychological roller-coaster of cultural transitions. *Online readings in psychology and culture* (Unit 8, Chapter 1).

[2] Language, identity, and affect

In her research into identity, **Fekete follows the post-structuralist research tradition and takes a holistic stance to look at language learners' and teachers' linguistic and cultural identities.** She views language learning not in terms of attainment or proficiency level but **how transformative language learning is for learners and how meaningfully it is lived by them.** In this vein, SLA is associated with **two types of desire** (Kramsch, 2009). According to the first type of desire, learners embrace the transformative potential of language learning and the new mode of self-expression enabled by the new language and the possibility to rid themselves of the linguistic and cultural constraints of their native language. Drawing on the second type of desire, learners feel threatened by the transformative potential of language learning and refuse the new meaning-making processes of the new language in favor of their mother tongue linguistic and cultural norms. The transformative potential of **SLA is inextricably linked to affect**, in other words, the learner's emotional responses to SLA. Therefore, **SLA is an embodied experience**, since it triggers a wide range of emotions in learners irrespective of proficiency level. As emotions and feelings are registered in and via the physical body, **SLA is viewed as a holistic experience involving the learner's brain, mind, and body.**

Key findings:

- The study of SLA or that of language learners should go beyond the study of cognitive processes and brain mechanisms. Language learning is a holistic process that involves the body, the mind, and brain of learners. **Learners are complex individuals who are much more than their various parts, traits, or features.**
- Identity in education should not be studied in isolation from other learner characteristics and the environment. Fekete calls for **a holistic approach** that is inherent in three fields: **the post-structuralist approach** to identity research, **language ecology** in education/SLA and **complex dynamic systems theory** in SLA/education.
- Language learners' **emotional responses often indicate the magnitude of transformation they have experienced in and via SLA.**
- The study of identity in education should focus on **the identities of learners and teachers** alike.
- Apart from the study of a person's individual identity, **learners' and teachers' collective identities** should also be explored. For instance, mapping **teachers' professional identities** is of the essence in education because there is no education without teachers.
- The context of online education has come to the fore in recent times; therefore, research into identity in education should be extended to the participants' **online and offline identities** that can provide insights into the benefits and the drawbacks of **online**

and offline education and the possibilities to better exploit the potential inherent in the two modes of education.

- The holistic view of learners, teachers, and their identities in education address all scope majors and minors in the ERL framework; thus, it is an appropriate approach to research and explore all scopes of the educational role of language.

Issue further elaborated in:

Fekete, A. (2021). Desire, freedom, and pain in English learners' emotional responses to SLA: A holistic look at English learners' multilingual identity construction. *Educational Role of Language Journal*, 2(4), 84-99.

Fekete, A. (2020). A Case Study on the Second Language Socialization and Enculturation Experiences of Advanced Learners of English from the Perspective of Language Ecology. In Fekete, A. & Lehmann, M. & Simon, K. (Eds.). *UPRT 2015: Empirical Studies in English Applied Linguistics in Honour of József Horváth* (pp. 143-161). Pécs: Lingua Franca Csoport.

Fekete, A. (2015). ELF teachers and learners' reflections on multilingualism, multiculturalism and identity construction. In Horváth, J. & Lehmann, M. & Lugossy, R. (Eds). *UPRT 2015: Empirical Studies in English Applied Linguistics* (pp. 74-90). Pécs: Lingua Franca Csoport.

Kramsch, C. (2009). *The multilingual subject*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

[3] **The Language Learner's Imagined Second Language Habitus**

Via exposure to SLA, language learners can compare and contrast the linguistic and cultural meaning making processes embedded in their mother tongue and the second language they are learning. This discovery leads to responses in their linguistic and cultural identities. The changes in their way of speaking, acting, and thinking in the different languages they speak can be captured by Bourdieu's (1997) concept of habitus. **The term habitus refers to how the individual speaks, talks, walks, and uses body language as a result of socialization taking place in the mother tongue culture.** In the process of SLA, learners learn about a new culture and witness first-hand (via interactions) and second-hand (via films, media, and the Internet) how native speakers of the second language are speaking, talking, acting, and thinking in their native language. However, learners cannot meet all native speakers. They can only imagine them in their head; therefore, they **rely on their imagination** to a great extent **to construct the habitus of native speakers in their head.** This combined with their real-life experiences affect their linguistic and cultural identity construction which is manifest in **the different ways they speak, act, and think in the various languages they speak.**

Key findings:

- **Multilingual speakers'** (including language learners) **imagined second language habitus casts light on how they speak, act, and think differently when they switch between their various languages.**
- The role and the relevance of the imagined second language habitus in SLA has been supported and confirmed by empirical findings (Fekete, 2018, 2021)
- The new concept confirms **the pivotal role of imagination in SLA.**
- The findings emphasize the importance of **recognizing and exploiting learners' different linguistic and cultural identities to facilitate their investment in SLA.** Investment, in turn, contributes to higher learner attainment and success in education.
- The concept of the learner's imagined second language habitus encompasses two scope majors: language and culture and language and personality as well as all four scope minors: language beliefs, language activities, language affect, and language matrices.

Issue further elaborated in:

Bourdieu, P. (1997). *Pascalian meditations*. (R. Nice, Trans.). Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Fekete, A. (2021). Desire, freedom, and pain in English learners' emotional responses to SLA: A holistic look at English learners' multilingual identity construction. *Educational Role of Language Journal*, 2(4), 84-99.

Fekete, A. (2018). *Exploring advanced English learners' multilingual identity construction from multiple perspectives*. (Doctoral dissertation, University of Pécs).

[4] Identity as a Complex Dynamic System of Individual Differences

Fekete's (2018) research into identity and individual differences has tackled two unresolved issues in the field of applied linguistics and education research. Identity research is usually approached holistically using qualitative methods, whereas the study of individual differences drawing on quantitative research often focuses on compartments (factors or aspects) of SLA or of language learners and thus disregards the interconnectedness of factors inherent in a holistic approach. The first problem concerns the lack of links to connect and reconcile these two seemingly contradictory research approaches. The second problem addresses how identity is disregarded in the various frameworks of individual differences in the context and process of SLA. The findings of Fekete's (2019) extensive research into both fields offers solutions to these problems. Consequently, **Fekete envisages identity as a complex dynamic system of individual differences.**

Key findings:

- She has found that the two research approaches can be reconciled because the learner's **identity is inherently linked to all other individual differences; therefore, she proposes that identity should be treated as a major individual difference.**
- She has established the link between identity research and the study of individual differences drawing on **complex dynamic systems theory (CDST).**
- Fekete regards **identity as a complex dynamic system of individual differences** in which 1) the learner's individual differences (e. g. motivation, language anxiety, willingness-to-communicate etc.) interact with one another as different levels of the system, also 2) respond to environmental stimuli, and 3) consequently shape the learner's identity construction 4) which, in turn, interacts with the environment and the learner's individual differences over time in a dynamic fashion.
- **In terms of research methods**, she has pointed out that the holistic approach usually drawn on in identity research and the compartmentalization approach usually employed in the investigation of individual differences should not be seen as exclusive but rather complementary in the application of **mixed methods research in which the weaknesses of either approach can be offset by the other approach.**

Issue further elaborated in:

- Fekete, A.** (2020). A mixed methods study on Hungarian English majors' individual differences and linguistic identity construction. In M. Lehmann, R. Lugossy, M. Nikolov, & G. Szabó (Eds.), *UPRT 2017: Empirical studies in English applied linguistics*. Pécs: Lingua Franca Csoport.
- Fekete, A.** (2018). *Exploring advanced English learners' multilingual identity construction from multiple perspectives*. (Doctoral dissertation, University of Pécs).
- Fekete, A.** (2014). Hungarian high school students' attitudes towards native and non-native English varieties in listening comprehension tests. in Krevelj, S.L. & Djigunovic, M. (Eds.) *UZRT 2014: Empirical Studies in English Applied Linguistics*. Zagreb: FF press.