Social Network Analysis of Saudi Students' English Language Learning

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ABSTRACT

Contact with a second language has been the focus of extensive research in Second Language Learning for quite sometime now. Yet, there is no agreement about the best way to measure contact. The most widely used tool is the Language Contact Profile (LCP), a survey which is typically used to record participants' pre-and post-contact with English Language (Freed, Segalowitz & Dewey 2004). However, this survey has been criticized for ignoring the amount, quality and intensity of contact. Therefore, in this study, we attempt to explore another possibility to examine language contact which is the use of Social Network Analysis (SNA), a methodological tool that has been largely used in Sociolinguistics to measure people's social relations and indicates the degree of individuals' integration into a certain community (e.g. Boissevain 1987; Lanza & Svendsen 2007; Lippi-Green 1989; Matsumoto 2010; Milroy 1987). Some 116 undergraduate students participated in this study to examine the ways these EFL learners engage with English language and native speakers. Findings show that the social network questionnaire is an effective tool to measure learners' contact with English in contexts where contact with English language is limited. The study concludes with some pedagogical recommendations to English teachers of this social group.

Keywords: Social network analysis (SNA), second language learning, language contact profile (LCP), Saudi students, English language