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**A REFLECTION ABOUT THE SOCIAL AND CULTURAL INFLUENCES THAT
THE LEARNERS OF ENGLISH ENDURE IN THE PROCESS OF LANGUAGE
LEARNING.**

CAMPINA GRANDE

2021

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in the process of language learning.**

Trabalho de Conclusão de Curso apresentado
ao Curso de Licenciatura em Letras – Inglês,
da Universidade Estadual da Paraíba, como
requisito parcial à obtenção do título de
Licenciatura em Letras – Inglês.

Área de concentração: Psicolinguística

Orientador: Prof. Dr. Daniela Gomes de Araújo Nóbrega

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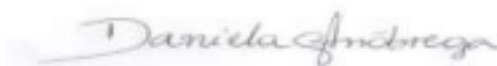
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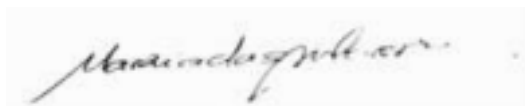
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RESUMO

O processo de aprendizagem de uma segunda língua inclui aspectos como estudos gramaticais, aquisição de vocabulário, atividades de leitura, escuta, escrita e fala. Outros aspectos são relacionados, por exemplo, como os estudantes interagem com fatores sociais e culturais da língua alvo. Baseado nisso, este artigo reflete na experiência de estudantes que passaram pelo processo de aprendizagem de uma nova língua, assim como considera o papel da cultura e como os estudantes interagem com ela. Nós também focamos em entender como a cultura e aspectos sociais podem influenciar o processo de aprendizagem do indivíduo e qual é seu resultado. Para que fosse possível o alcance de nossos objetivos nós utilizamos das teorias de renomados autores. A teoria de Aculturação de Schumann (1978), O modelo sócio-educacional de Gardner (1960) e a autonomia no processo de aprendizagem de uma segunda língua de Benson (2007). O relacionamento do estudante com a cultura da língua em foco e como eles se veem como participantes dessa cultura será um dos aspectos discutidos neste trabalho, assim como, o estudante interage em aprender uma segunda língua. A pesquisa de campo realizada com estudantes de inglês na Universidade Estadual da Paraíba mostrou como esses modelos mencionados fazem parte das experiências dos participantes e analisando suas respostas conseguimos observar como aprender uma segunda língua é complexo e cheio de nuances.

Palavras-chave: Aprendizagem de língua. Aspectos sociais. Cultura.

ABSTRACT¹

The learning process of a second language includes aspects such as grammatical studies, vocabulary acquisition, input, and output process. Another factor is the way learners interact with the social and cultural aspects of the target language. Based on that, this article reflects upon the experiences that learners have in the process of language learning, as well as, consider what is the role of culture. We also aim to understand how culture and society can influence someone's learning and what their outcome is, also assembling research could provide an understanding of the English undergraduate students from the State University of Paraíba who had similar experiences to what the theories said. To achieve our objective, bibliographic research was used as support for the following field research. The acculturation model by Schumann (1978), the Socio-educational model by Gardner (1960), and Autonomy in language learning by Benson (2007) are the base for this work. Their theories and works will provide an explanation and the means to achieve our goal. explains the role of culture in the process of studying a second tongue. The relationship between the learner and the culture of the target language and how they will see themselves as participants of this culture will one of the aspects discussed here, as well, how a learner interacts with learning a second language. The field research with undergraduates of English showed how the students' experiences in learning the language, and how by collecting their answers we were able to confirm the theories studied in a practical view.

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Keywords: Language learning. Socio aspects. Culture.

1. INTRODUCTION

Learning English has been the focus of many people through the years. Many of them have the goal of thinking of future job opportunities, meeting new people from different countries, or simply knowing more about English-speaking cultures. We have a wide range of online and in-person English courses to help people achieve their objectives; still, numerous people are now learning a second language out of this multi-optional environment, now some people are learning through different paths. This change did not happen suddenly, it is a result of many different changes in our society, culture, and technological world.

The main objective of this article is to reflect upon the experiences that learners have in the process of language learning, as well as, consider what is the role of culture. We also aim to understand how culture and society can influence someone's learning and their outcome. Having as support the studies and theories of Gardner (1960), Benson (2001), and Schumann (1978). Another goal is to analyze how aspects such as community, family, and educational system influence the beliefs of the learners when studying a new language, especially English. Also, verify how the tendency of the out-of-class language learning became a phenomenon, as well as how it impacts the learners' language development. And finally, understand through field research and case study how Brazilian students from the State University of Paraíba learned English along with what were the processes utilized, to find out if they agree or disagree with the theories of Gardner (1985), Benson (2001), and Schumann (1978) about the process of language learning.

People are now learning a new language following different steps from the traditional and well-known approaches, for example, the approaches used in the classroom such as communicative and natural approaches. This research was motivated by a certain curiosity about this change in the process of learning, and reflecting on a personal experience it seemed fitting to search and study about the way people are now mastering a foreign language. Additionally, understand how the process of language acquisition evolved through the years and how this can impact the path of a language learner. This work firstly presents to the reader the theoretical foundation, that explains all the theories and models considered to conduct the following field research, secondly, we provide a description of how the research was conducted. Thirdly, we present the data collected and analysis from the answers of the participants, finally we offer what associations were possible regarding the theoretical foundation and with the results from the research.

2. AN OUTLOOK ABOUT OUT-OF-CLASS LANGUAGE LEARNING

When the objective is to learn a new language we try to find the best ways to learn that tongue, many try language schools, others online courses, others try to immerse themselves in situations where the target language is used, for example, films, series, and songs. No matter the way you choose, the process of language acquisition will have its ups and downs. What can happen quite often is that the students do not feel satisfied by their performance while learning a second language, so what are some of the factors that can help them to improve, and how out-of-class language learning is affecting their improvement? Through a series of theories presented by relevant authors, we discuss how they can correlate to the ways people are now learning English. We will start by talking about the acculturation model by Schumann (1978), and see how his theory and his views on culture can influence the success of a learner.

However, before we begin talking about this model it is necessary to understand how second language acquisition (L2) is defined and uncover a definition of culture. About the L2 acquisition, Ellis (1997) in the book ‘Second language acquisition’ defines this topic, she states the following:

“At first sight, the meaning of the term ‘second language acquisition seems transparent but, in fact, it requires careful explanation. For one thing, in this context ‘second’ can refer to any language that is learned subsequent to the mother tongue. Thus, it can refer to the learning of a third or fourth language. Also, ‘second’ is not intended to contrast with ‘foreign’. Whether you are learning naturally as a result of living in a country where it is spoken or learning it in a classroom through instruction, it is customary to speak generically of ‘second’ language acquisition.”

Further in the chapter she also says that L2 acquisition can be considered the one that is learned besides the mother tongue, which may happen inside the classroom or outside.

The definition of culture can be broad and change according to different perspectives, in the article ‘Language and Culture’ (2016) Claire Kramsch and Zhu Hua define cultures as the way members of a community share common aspects such as social space, history, and common imaginings. And even though an individual may leave this culture they retain most of the features of it. They can maintain a system of standards for perceiving, believing, evaluating, and acting. Taking into consideration this definition it is interesting to observe that these standards will be, also, connected to language and how they can influence the learning of another tongue.

In the same article Kramsch and Zhu Hua talk about how language and culture cannot be separated and how culture can influence the process of language learning, especially English. In a section about ‘The changing goals of ELT (English language teaching) from a socio-cultural and socio-political perspective’, the authors explain how the way culture is linked with language teaching and learning has changed since 1990. Still in this section, there are some statements where it shows that now, more than ever, English is not a culture-free language, the following quotation, from the article ‘Language and Culture’ (2016), makes it clear how nowadays the process of learning English is viewed.

“English is not, in fact, a culture-free language, which people can appropriate for themselves and use as a tool to get things done. It bears traces of the cultural contexts in which it has been used, and contributes to shaping the identity of speakers of English. Making the language your own is already a difficult enterprise linguistically, but the process is rendered more problematic by the pressure in the media, the film industry, social networks, and popular culture to adopt consumerist lifestyles associated with the use of English as a global language.”

In the following section topics and on the research conducted with some English students we will be able to see how culture is a vital aspect of the learning process and how students used it in their favor. First, we shall discuss the studies and models proposed by Schumann.

2.1 The acculturation model

In the acculturation model, Schumann talks about how the degree of a learner's success depends upon their degree of acculturation, meaning that the more a learner immerses in culture and internalizes it the easier it will be to learn the language of that culture. And many people do this today without intending to, because of our globalized world and the dominance of some cultures. The article, “‘Learning without intending to’: A qualitative study of high

school students out-of-class English learning practices' by Natpat Chanjavanakul (2017) shows that the study of pop culture in English is one of the ways to enhance students' motivation, as they are in an environment where the language is constantly being used.

The main aspect of this model is the fact that the more the learner is immersed and surrounded by the community of the target language and their culture the better will be the outcome. Schumann's model has eight variables, social dominance, assimilation, preservation or adaptation, enclosure, cohesiveness, size, congruence, attitude, and intended length of residence. When the student masters most of these variables they are on the right path for a successful language learning process. What can also happen is that a student may master some of those variables more than others, meaning that depending on the learner's focus some of them will be more important than the others.

However, immersion in another culture to absorb as much as the student can so they can improve their performance in a second language cannot be successful at all times. When the student does not feel comfortable or interested in the culture of the target language it will be harder for them to be intimate with the language, if they do not have any other contact with the tongue outside the moment of studying. According to Chanjavanakul (2017) looking through the lenses of the "sociocultural perspective, learning a language is not just learning sounds, symbols, and meaning, but it is also learning to use the language appropriately to communicate and be part of it." The learner has to have an active part in the culture of the target language, so they can have more chances of being successful.

What can happen often in classrooms of language courses is that the students there are mostly aware of the importance of learning a second language, yet they do not see themselves as active participants in the culture of the target language. Schumann (1978) in his theory explains that when the social and psychological distance between the learner and the target language has reduced the chances of success are wide, the contrary can mean an unsuccessful trajectory. Therefore culture and the way a learner interacts with it is crucial for their development in the language. And also dictates how successful they will be.

2.1.1 The acculturation model in the out-of-class perspective

When we think of out-of-class language learning, when can we see the impact of Schumann's model? If we think of English as a second language that a learner is studying, we can see how the biggest English-speaking country's culture impacts the lives of so many people around the world. In fact, if we take a look back and consider some historical facts we can point out the decades from the 1920s until the 1960s when the United States, especially Hollywood, began to produce pop culture materials and how they experienced the best years in the film business. It was an extremely successful era that changed the way the world consumed the film industry. Of course, the golden days of Hollywood came to an end; however, the number of art materials that were spread throughout the globe did not. Now we have TV shows, films, music, YouTube, stream platforms that continue to spread American culture around the world. Not to mention the geographical and political aspects that can also influence this propagation of American culture. And because now we have so many ways to get in contact with this culture and its variants, people are closer to the language itself.

The more you get in contact with the language and parts of its culture the more probable it will be for you to be proficient in that tongue according to Schumann (1978). Thus this new wave of films, series, and so on helped greatly in the process of acculturation, and with them came what we call stream platforms, such as Netflix, Amazon Prime, Disney Plus,

HBO, etc. Social media also has a great impact on the process of acculturation. To name a few we have Facebook with 2,7 billion users, Instagram with 1,2 billion, Twitter with 397 million, and TikTok with 732 million users, according to data provided by Google. Many of these users do not speak English, but because they are now so exposed by the platform to the English language they began to internalize the tongue without intending to. Another thing they start to internalize and repeat are some aspects of their culture, for example, the way they dress, speak and dance.

The acculturation model is important because it reminds us that learning a language is not simply being aware of the grammar rules and the lexicon but the whole sphere that surrounds it. When Schumann (1978) proposed this model we can see that it is about the proximity of learners to the culture of the target language. We accept that this is an important aspect to study in language acquisition, but some authors have pointed out some gaps in his model. Freeman and Long (1991) point out to us a few things that this model lacked. One of the first things they said was that Schumann's model did not consider the social and psychological factors. According to them in the model, Schumann did not contemplate these factors as determinants to well-succeeded language acquisition.

Another thing that Freeman and Long (1991) pointed out in the acculturation model is that it does not cover the change that occurs over time regarding the social and psychological factors, which means that in the model we do not have the opportunity to consider these factors as part of the process of internalizing the target language culture. An additional factor that is missing in Schumann's model is the personal factors. Factors such as age, previous educational experiences, family separation, and so on. These points were called to attention by these authors because they were considered important aspects of language acquisition. However, why are these aspects important and what are their influences in the process of language learning? Gardner (1960) makes it clear why in his socio-educational model.

2.1.2 The socio-educational model

If Schumann's theory did not consider the psychological and social factors, another scholar in their studies did. Gardner after many years studying the subject proposed the socio-educational model (1960). This model proposed that there are two main individual variables in language acquisition, ability, and motivation. In this model, Gardner also talks about the relationship between the learner, the culture, and the community of the target language. In this model, we can get a perspective of the personal experiences of the learner and how external factors may influence or not the learning process.

First, in the socio-educational model, we have the individual ability variable. In this variable ability means intelligence and language aptitude. For Gardner, a person with ability will tend to be more successful than those who are not so gifted in the ability of language learning; however, a person who has a lot of ability in learning a language may lack motivation. In the article 'Motivation in second language acquisition - Gardner Socio-educational model' (2011) by Lovato, the author mentions that ability and motivation can work independently because some students may have more of one variable than the other. Ability is also more connected with the formal aspects of language learning, such as classroom environment, textbooks, and so on.

The same happens to the second variable, the more motivation the student has the more successful they will be. Further in his theory, Gardner goes deeper into the motivation aspect. In his paper entitled "Motivation and second language acquisition" (2007), he says

that motivation is not something easy to explain and reduce to a solo definition, but he states that motivation can be seen as something interconnected with the informal environment, especially in out-of-class circumstances. Another important thing he says about motivation is; “It definitely cannot be assessed by merely asking individuals to give reasons for why they think learning a language is important to them.” A person who has the motivation has the drive to achieve this goal; they are driven by many aspects such as future job opportunities, educational enhancement, traveling, etc, that will make them aware of what they need to do to learn a second language.

Among all these factors we also have what Gardner (1960) calls the Socio-Psychological Variables. These variables are, for example, age, gender, ethnicity, and social class. In his studies, Gardner talks about the Socio-educational model where the social and cultural environment of someone determines the beliefs of the student about some language and culture. In the research that was conducted with undergraduates students of English, we were able to see how these variables had an impact on their learning process. The data collected provided a vision of what might be crucial to their development.

2.1.2.1 The socio-educational model in the out-of-class perspective

When we talk about out-of-class language acquisition one of our objectives is to understand what are the main factors that help students learn without being in a formal situation. Taking into consideration the studies of the authors mentioned above we see the factors that we can ponder are many and to understand them is vital to realize how this movement outside of the classrooms is growing. Gardner (2007) hypothesized that to consider motivation in the process of learning a second language we need to look at two points, the educational context, and the cultural context. In the following quote, Gardner (2007) explains why these two points are important in the process of language learning.

When discussing the roots of motivation to learn a second language in the school context we have proposed that we should consider it from the point of view of both the Educational Context and the Cultural Context. [...] By saying that this should be considered when focussing on the concept of motivation, we mean that the individual is a member of a particular culture and many features of the individual are influenced by that culture. In the individual, this cultural context is expressed in terms of one's attitudes, beliefs, personality characteristics, ideals, expectations, etc.

Further, if we consider that in the Acculturation model and socio-educational model, by Schumann and Garner, culture itself has a major part in both, we can infer that one of the important factors that we must consider in the out-of-class language learning phenomenon is culture. Of course, to explain the impact of the culture of the target language we must take a deeper look into the social and economic influence that it may have on the culture of the learner. If we consider, for example, a Brazilian student learning English we can think about the impact the American culture has in Brazil, with all of their cultural business, such as films, series, music, social media, and so on. Having this in mind the research conducted with the English undergraduates students of the State University of Paraíba tried to understand how these students used these aspects in their favor.

If the learner is in direct contact with cultural aspects of the target language the process of acculturation will be somewhat easier because the learner will be in constant contact with language and aspects of their culture, as well as suffering impacts of the American economic power. However, if we think about a learner from the United States studying Portuguese the cultural impact of Brazil on the learner's own culture will be

different. In this case, we may consider what Schumann (1978) said about cultural shock, he says that if the learner is not successful in overcoming the cultural shock they will have a big chance of not being succeeded. Another thing is if the learner cannot see themselves as participants of the community, in this case, the Brazilian community, this will prevent them from acquiring important language skills. Thus, we consider this situation also involving a relationship of power, especially when it comes to economic dominance.

2.1.2.1.1 Benson's autonomy and self-initiated learning theories

After considering these two models and talking about how they can impact out-of-class language learning we have another aspect that is major in this process, Benson (2001) talks about what more we can consider. The first thing is that our mindset about how to learn something new changed. Benson (2001), talks about this change. In his study he discourses autonomy and self-initiated learning, explaining how students today are more willing to take responsibility for their learning attached to their motivation. He states: "Indeed, the tendency has been towards a blurring of distinction between 'classroom' and 'out-of-class' applications, leading to new and often complex understandings of the role of autonomy in language teaching and learning"

Taking into consideration what was said in the extract above we can think of the impact that American and British pop culture has on Brazilian society. How movies, series, and social media influences our daily lives are constant, so the learner is always in contact with the language, and without intending to learn it. It is what Benson (2001) calls out-of-class language learning. What is also common in out-of-class learning is that the informal aspects of learning a language will be stronger than the formal ones. For example, in this environment language will have a more practical use, worries about grammar rules will not be constant as the learner is preoccupied with understanding the meaning of what was said, not why the sentence, for example, was constructed in a certain way.

Benson helps us define out-of-class language learning. For him the out-of-class learning refers to any learning that happens outside the classroom, also includes learning in a naturalistic situation. Meaning that mostly the learning will have an informal approach, which does not mean that it is disorganized, but rather focus on the personal interests of the learner. By these personal interests, we have what he calls self-initiated learning. In his work, Benson writes about autonomy in language learning, self-initiated learning, and out-of-class learning. Taking into consideration the studies of Benson we can understand why the out-of-class phenomenon is a present activity nowadays.

The first thing we are going to consider is what Benson (2001) calls self-initiated learning, he says that self-initiated learning happens because it is associated with one or more personal interests of the learner. We can think of situations where the learner is passionate about music, in their daily life they study, listen, search about it, and even sing or play an instrument. In this situation combining the desire to learn a second language and their interest in music, the learner will merge the two interests and learn the language through something that they already enjoy. What also can happen is that a person initially is not looking for learning another language, but because of how much the English language is a worldwide tongue, it will be inserted in a certain interest of that person, for example, video games, most of the players go intending to enjoy the game, however, end up learning the language because is so present in that activity, therefore a person, without intending to, learn another language because of specific interest.

This behavior of associating something a person has an interest in and the process of studying a new language requires another aspect that Benson (2001) talks about. It is autonomy. He states that autonomy is something not easy to define, it is complex and many people can consider the value of the teacher in the process of the learner's autonomy. But one clear thing is that the levels of autonomy change according to the topic of learning, meaning that a student may present a different level of autonomy while studying science and language. Depending on the personal self-interest of the learner the level of autonomy may increase or decrease. Autonomy will also have an essential part in the commitment of the learner in engaging in learning second language activities and the time spent doing so.

The out-of-class phenomenon is something that will grow, considering the acculturation processes of the learner, their interests, their level of autonomy, and their will to self-initiate the learning process, the out-of-class learning will be well structured and the chances of success will be bigger. In this situation, the learner will have the freedom to learn at their own pace and to focus on what they mainly enjoy studying, as well as to challenge themselves. Immersing themselves in the culture of the target language, being aware of the community behaviors and their identification with it will lead them to an ideal setting for language learning.

3. METHODOLOGY

This research paper reflects upon the experiences that learners have in the process of language learning, as well as, consider what is the role of culture. We also aim to understand how culture and society can influence someone's learning and what their outcome. And how they respond to the many improvements that the language learning process suffered during the years. This article shares a study and analysis of field research conducted with the participation of English undergraduate students of the State University of Paraíba. It was conducted with the intent of understanding which are the ways English-speaking students find to learn the language, also to apply the theories presented on the paper to verify their accuracy. According to Gil (2008), field research allows us to take an in-depth look at a specific issue, as well as, to have a specific group of people or community to analyze. In this research, our focus is on the undergraduate students of English from the State University of Paraíba (UEPB) in Campina Grande. Therefore by researching these students, specifically English major students, we have the opportunity to understand their ways of learning English and how aspects such as culture, community, and technological and media use influenced this process. By choosing this type of research, we have to be careful about the data collection process and how we may analyze it. As we are looking for specific responses our process was previously well established so that our work on examining the data can be precise.

To conduct the research we had as the main tool *Google Forms*, a tool that enabled us to share the questionnaire with participants, as well as, provided the chance to collect precise data. The questionnaire was based on the theories and studies of the three main authors discussed in this article, Gardner (1960), Benson (2001), and Schumman (1978), these authors guided the whole study as well as helped us to understand the answers of the participants and analyze the different processes of acquiring a second language that the students went through.

Another aspect of field research is its descriptive nature. According to Gil (2008), this type of aspect enables us to have access to characteristics of specific groups and it is also very fitting to us because we can study their specific characteristics and be fulfilled by its response. Normally researchers who work with this type of investigation are looking to observe the environment of investigation with a deep look into their specificity and have a processual

analysis. We wanted to be able to access data that would provide facts about a certain social group and by their response, we would be able to come to a certain conclusion. By choosing to put together field research we had the opportunity to acknowledge not only our perspective on the learning process of English but also the perspective of others.

Taking into consideration the title of this article ‘A reflection about the social and cultural influences that the learners of English endure in the process of language learning it is also important to have bibliographic research as a tool to provide to the reader the renowned authors and their theories about the aspects shared here. Bibliographic research is also important because it will help us see the importance of the data collected to provide the reader a clear vision of what is being placed and considered.

The out-of-class language learning is still something new and using this kind of information provided by other authors such as Gardner (1960), Benson (2001), and Schumman (1978) it will be possible to have a perspective about what has already been researched and what can be explored on further analysis. This type of research will also supply reliable references that will give authenticity to the points about the English learning process by students of the language highlighted throughout the composition.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Our research focused on the English undergraduate students from the State University of Paraíba. Having an interest in understanding how the theories of acculturation, the socio-educational model, and out-of-class language learning were present throughout their language learning process. We used the *Google forms* platform to provide the students with the questionnaire. The form had in total twelve questions, of yes or no, and a specific box for them to justify their answers. All of the questions on this form had a concept supported by the authors studied such as Gardner (1960), Schumann (1978), and Benson (2001). We also had as an objective understanding how aspects such as culture, media, and educational system were present in the learning process of English of these students.

During two months this questionnaire was available and shared among students of the university. Students from the second semester up were the target, as it was interesting to focus on those students who had previous experience at the university and in studying the English language. All of the processes were conducted online, including the creation of the questions, the distribution of the questionnaire, and the gathering of the answers. As a final step we had to make two analyses, first, the graphics and what the percentage said to us and second the written answers of each participant. The written answers were important because through them a deeper analysis was possible, it made it viable to understand the reason why the participants were answering yes or no to the questions. The questionnaire consisted of the following questions:

1. How do you consider your level of English?
2. Among the options below, what is the main factor that influences your English learning process? a) Educational system; b) Entertainment Media use; c) Digital Technology use; d) Social media use; e) The foreign culture; f) Family influence.
3. Do you consider that aspects such as age, gender, ethnicity, and social class can influence the learning process of English? And why? Please, justify your answer below;
4. Gardner’s socio-educational model states that the learners’ beliefs about language and culture are determined by their social and cultural environment. Could this statement be related to your journey in English language learning? Justify your answer below;

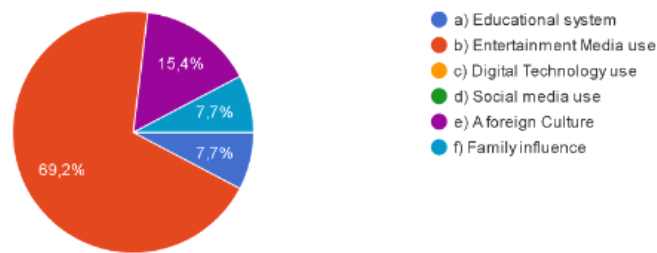
5. Could you say that a big part of your process of language learning was influenced by aspects of the North-American and British cultures? Justify your answer below;
6. Do you believe that you became more proficient in English because of the entertainment media? For example movies, series, tv shows, reality shows. Justify your answer below;
7. Schumann (1978) talks about the Acculturation model. He states that the degree of a learner's success in a second language depends upon the learners' degree of Acculturation, meaning that the more a learner internalizes the culture of the target language, the better will their development. Could you make any associations between this statement and your process of learning English? Justify your answer below;
8. One of the aspects of Schumann's theory is social dominance. In Brazil, we have a vast variety of cultures. However, we can see many aspects of our life that come from outside. Do you believe that the social dominance of a certain culture impacts our own and therefore influences the way we learn English? Justify your answer below
9. Benson (2001) talks about out-of-class language learning. His theory talks about the process of language learning outside the formal structures of the classroom and its nuances. Do you see yourself as a result of out-of-class language learning? Justify your answer below;
10. Another social aspect that takes a great part of everyone's daily lives is social media. The easy way to contact people from all over the world is one of its advantages. In these platforms, English is the main language used. Do you think that you are more exposed to the implications of real-life English? Justify your answer below;
11. Do you think that a person who is in the process of learning English can be completely separated from the cultural and social aspects of the target language? Justify your answer below;
12. After considering all of these topics and reflecting on your learning journey do you think that the socio-psychological, cultural, and historical aspects influence or influenced your English learning process? Justify your answer below.

After analyzing all the answers, five of these questions were shown to be the ideal summary of the research. We shall focus firstly on question number 2. The question inquired which factors influenced their English learning process. Among the options the letter 'b. Entertainment media use' had the most votes with 69,2% of the answers. It is interesting to notice that this was the answer the participants most identified with regarding the influence of the media. However, it is not a surprising answer, as we consider previous English is not only used in formal situations but also informal situations such as watching films, series, playing video games, etc.

According to Schumann (1978) the more a learner takes part in cultural aspects of the target language the easier it will be for them to learn it. The consumption of media products allows the learner not only to use the language but to see the authentic use of it. It is an opportunity to be immersed in an environment where the language is applied in all its nuances. And the results of the research show that this is something that works and gives these students a bigger exposure to the language itself, making them more aware of its use. However, the entertainment media was not the only factor that influence the participants, the other 30,8% was divided among the other options as shown in the following graphic;

Graphic 1

2- Among the options below, what is the main factor that influenced your English learning process?



Source: Elaborated by the researcher, 2021.

The second most voted option was the foreign culture. This shows to us that when we consider the process of Acculturation, and how culture can have an impact on one's learning process, their development will be strongly impacted by these factors. And this is an indication of the results from the fifth question. On this question we asked if the North-American and British culture had any influence on their learning process, the results were not surprising. 100% of the participants said yes. All of them agreed that these nations and their culture influenced their learning and still influence them to this day. Among the written answers the participants mentioned some factors as to why they answered yes. The main cultural factors mentioned were music, films, series, and video games. These answers allow us to understand how the theories Schumann (1978) and Gardner (2007) are very close to our reality, by analyzing the answers we see that the participants not only agree with these theories but also are the outcome of it.

However, those factors were not the only ones mentioned. An interesting factor raised was how North American and British culture can influence someone's accent. And because of geographical proximity, the North-American accent has a stronger influence on learners from Brazil. One of the participants said the following to justify their answer; "Yes. As I said earlier, I have always had a lot of American culture in my life. This is reflected in things like, for example, my accent, it's the American (or at least, it's what I'm learning) and it's also what I'm most used to. No matter how much I have a great fascination for the British accent, my favorite has been the American". Besides the cultural aspects, we can see that the learners also acquire aspects such as the accent, these influences that the learners suffer throughout their learning path will shape the way they see and use the language.

Thirdly we have question number seven, this question mainly focused on the Acculturation theory by Schuman (1978). It was asked if the participants could make any associations with the theory and their learning process. Most of them said yes, which corresponded to 92,3% of the total. In this question the justification of the participants was very similar to what we considered in the theoretical foundation, most of them mentioned aspects such as English pronunciation, use of the language in everyday life, the choices of vocabulary, and so on. All of these aspects were heavily influenced by the culture of the target language, and because of this culture, the participants said that it influenced the choices in language, but also helped them to make real associations in their life using the tongue.

Shifting the focus now to the perspective of the out-of-class language learning the question nine asked the participants if they saw themselves as a result of this phenomenon. About 84,6% of them said yes. And many were their reasons. Factors such as consumption of

media, how the language was in their daily lives, also how many of them were not able to pay for formal English courses and consequently finding ways to get in contact with the language by themselves were some of the answers. These answers can be attached to what Gardner (1960) said about motivation, and the attitude a learner has to have towards the target language. Gardner said that he could not see how someone could learn a language if they did not like the group that spoke the language in focus. This infatuation can have a positive impact on the student's motivation, considering that they are motivated by aspects that generate a genuine interest in the language, in that regard, they will have more chances of being successful.

Finally, the last question in focus is the number eleven. This question inquired if the participant believed that a learner could be separated from the culture and social aspects of the target language. All of them said no, an impactful response that shows to us how the theories of Gardner, Schumann, and Benson are accurate, at least for most of the language students. Some of the reasons the participants gave to answer 'no' was that the reason why they started to learn English was because of how the culture of the United States was present in their lives, and how learning aspects of its culture helped them engage in conversations in the target language. A participant said the following about culture and social aspects: "No, whether in any language we are always making a bridge with the culture that is what motivates learning a language." Another added: "To learn a language It's necessary to interact with it somehow, consuming authentic material in the target language involves contact with another culture"

Finally, what this research indicates to us, is that not only can we see the practical confirmation of all the theories studied, but also how learning a language and its process can involve many aspects. One of the main factors exposed here was the culture. Culture represents a community of people and what they are, manifesting interest in a specific culture, and learning aspects of it, especially the language, can give the learner a connection between them and a group of people that they initially did not see themselves as part of. Kramsch and Zhu Hua (2016) state that since the 1990's the connection between language and culture became more complex, one of the reasons for this is the growing multilingualism of human communications. More than ever people are mastering at least a second language. English having the status of a lingua franca gives a wider interest in learning the language and its different aspects.

5. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Finally, the present research paper discussed the theories and studies from Gardner (1960) about the socio-educational model, Schumann (1978) and his Acculturation model, and Benson (2001) and his studies about autonomy and motivation. Further, this article presented research with English undergraduate students from the State University of Paraíba. In this research, we were able to analyze the experiences of the participants on learning English and if they had any similarities to the theories discussed. At the beginning of this paper, we expressed our objective to understand how social and cultural aspects could influence one's language learning process. By discussing the view of the authors mentioned, we proposed here a description of what are the influences, and how they can impact the process of learning English.

By conducting research we had the opportunity to explore not only the view of the authors but how their ideas were present in the practical view. Also, it allowed us to make connections between the participants and how most of them had a similar path, as well as, how their ideas fall into the same categories of what was put here. Eventually, we were also

able to show how the out-of-class learning perspective is something present in the lives of many language students, mainly those who participated in the research. The analysis also provided the reasons why understanding how the process of language learning works makes us more aware of how studying a language can develop through the years.

Social and, consequently, cultural aspects are important parts of the process of language learning. Factors such as community, age, educational level, and social conditions are also part and influence someone's learning. Putting them into perspective allows us to comprehend what it takes to master a language and how easier or more difficult this process will be. By studying theories about the influence of culture, society, and out-of-class perspective we can describe what may be the case of many students that nowadays learn English differently, and how informal aspects have a substantial impact on one's learning.

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