

## THE PROCESS OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE ACQUISITION AS AN ACT OF REPOSITIONING ONESELF: A PERSPECTIVE OF ECOLINGUISTICS

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**Abstract** This article examines foreign language acquisition (FLA) as a process of identity repositioning within social and cultural contexts. Using ecolinguistics and Bourdieu's theory of symbolic power, it argues that FLA extends beyond cognition to social adaptation, providing access to new cultural and economic opportunities. It explores language as symbolic capital, shaping power relations and mobility. Through an ecolinguistic lens, it highlights how learners renegotiate identity within diverse settings and how institutions influence agency. By framing FLA as self-repositioning, the paper emphasizes its transformative role in identity and social participation, calling for further research on learners' experiences.

**Keywords** Cultural capital, ecolinguistics, ecological approach, foreign language acquisition, repositioning, symbolic power.

### Introduction

Foreign language acquisition is not only a cognitive task but also a deeply social and cultural experience that impacts identity and power relations. The process of acquiring a new language allows individuals to navigate new social contexts, adjust their identities, and access wider economic and cultural opportunities.

Recent research in the fields of sociolinguistics, ecolinguistics, and language acquisition highlights the complexity of this process, emphasizing that foreign language acquisition is intertwined with broader social structures and cultural dynamics. Notably, the development of ecolinguistics as a discipline has provided a new perspective on language, framing it as part of

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an ecological system that interacts with the social and cultural environment in which it is used<sup>1</sup>. Theories such as Bourdieu's<sup>2</sup> concept of symbolic power further elaborate on how language operates as a form of cultural capital, influencing social positioning and identity.

While extensive research has explored the cognitive and pedagogical aspects of foreign language acquisition, less attention has been paid to the sociocultural dimensions of language learning as an act of repositioning oneself. In particular, studies often overlook the extent to which foreign language acquisition serves as a tool for individuals to renegotiate their social identities, gain symbolic capital, and transform their roles within different cultural and economic structures. Moreover, research gaps remain in understanding how learners navigate the power dynamics involved in language learning, particularly in relation to dominant languages like English. Despite the growing body of literature on ecolinguistics, there is limited empirical and theoretical analysis that connects language acquisition to the repositioning of identity through the frameworks of symbolic power and ecological interaction.

This paper attempts to address this gap by examining the process of foreign language acquisition as an act of repositioning oneself within new social and cultural frameworks. Drawing on Haugen's ecological approach to language<sup>3</sup> and Bourdieu's theory of symbolic power<sup>4</sup>, the study explores how learners leverage language as a form of cultural capital to access new social networks and opportunities. The research employs a literature review to integrate insights from ecolinguistics and sociolinguistics, illustrating how foreign language acquisition empowers individuals to reshape their identities, assert themselves in new contexts, and gain symbolic power.

By understanding foreign language acquisition through this ecological and sociocultural lens, the paper aims to contribute to the broader discourse on language learning, identity formation, and social mobility. The study seeks to illuminate the transformative potential of foreign language acquisition, emphasizing how it serves as both a personal and social act of repositioning in an interconnected global context.

It is worthwhile noting that the subjects of foreign language acquisition considered in this study primarily belong to institutionalized educational settings, such as secondary schools, universities, and adult language learning centers. These environments are characterised by structured curricula, formalized instruction, and socioculturally embedded learning practices that support the acquisition of foreign languages. The learners typically include adolescents and adults who engage with language learning either as part of their formal education or in pursuit of personal and professional development goals. These individuals operate within sociocultural spheres where language competence in dominant global languages - particularly English - offers symbolic power and access to upward social mobility. Consequently, the eco-sociolinguistic perspective applied in this study is especially pertinent to contexts where institutional support

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<sup>1</sup> Alwin F. Fill, "Introduction," in *The Routledge Handbook of Ecolinguistics*, eds. Alwin F. Fill and Hermine Perez (Routledge, 2017).

<sup>2</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power* (Harvard University Press, 1991).

<sup>3</sup> Einar Haugen, *The Ecology of Language: Essays by Einar Haugen* (Stanford University Press, 1972).

<sup>4</sup> Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power*.

for language learning intersects with broader social imperatives such as globalization, migration, and international labor market participation.

## 1. Orientation of Ecolinguistics

Ecolinguistics has developed as a field aimed at exploring the connections between language and its environmental contexts. Its origins date back to key theoretical advancements in the study of both ecology and language from the mid-nineteenth century, eventually growing into a diverse discipline by the twenty-first century.<sup>5</sup>

Einar Haugen, a key figure in the development of language ecology, made significant contributions to the field of ecolinguistics. In his definition of “language ecology,”<sup>6</sup> Haugen described it as the study of the interactions between a language and its environment, emphasizing that a language’s true environment is the society that uses it for communication. His work highlighted the psychological and sociological aspects of language, asserting that language exists within the minds of its users and interacts with both social structures and the natural environment. This laid the foundation for one of the two strands of ecolinguistics, known as the “Haugenian approach,”<sup>7</sup> which draws parallels between biological and linguistic diversity. It explores the relationships between languages and their environments, whether in the human brain or broader social contexts. This approach stresses that language is not just a communicative tool but also a reflection of intricate ecological interactions,<sup>8</sup> and it is this Haugenian interpretation that the present article adopts.

Ecolinguistics views linguistic phenomena as interconnected, interdependent, and interactional.<sup>9</sup> This interconnectedness suggests that every element within the system is related to every other element and to the system as a whole as well as that the existence of a linguistic phenomenon is influenced by changes in other phenomena, which can alter or eliminate it.<sup>10</sup> Interaction, in turn, means that each part influences others while also being influenced itself; thus, there is no one-way effect, but rather a reciprocal relationship. In line with that, Kramsch and Steffensen<sup>11</sup> claim that an ecolinguistic analysis connects linguistic information to the

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<sup>5</sup> Fill, “Introduction,” 1-7.

<sup>6</sup> Haugen, *The Ecology of Language: Essays by Einar Haugen*, 325.

<sup>7</sup> Ming Cheng, “Theoretical Framework for Ecological Discourse Analysis: A Summary of *New Developments of Ecological Discourse Analysis*,” *Journal of World Languages* 8, no. 1 (2022): 188, <https://doi.org/10.1515/jwl-2021-0030>.

<sup>8</sup> See Haugen, *The Ecology of Language: Essays by Einar Haugen*; Fill, “Introduction,” 3.

<sup>9</sup> Sunne Vork Steffensen, “Language, Ecology and Society: An Introduction to Dialectical Linguistics,” in *Language, Ecology and Society: A Dialectical Approach*, ed. Jørgen Christian Bang and Jørgen Døør (Continuum, 2007).

<sup>10</sup> Claire Kramsch and Sunne Vork Steffensen, “Ecological Perspectives on Second Language Acquisition and Socialization,” in *Language Socialization: Encyclopedia of Language and Education Volume 8*, eds. Patricia A. Duff and Nancy H. Hornberger (Springer Science + Business Media LLC, 2008), 18.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

intricate context of language users' situational positioning, along with the sociocultural and socioeconomic attributes of the speech communities.

## 2. The Symbolic Power of Language

In his seminal work *Language and Symbolic Power*, Bourdieu claims that language is not just a medium for communication but a form of symbolic capital that influences social positioning and power relations. Bourdieu explains that language serves as a form of “symbolic power,”<sup>12</sup> meaning that certain ways of speaking carry more authority and prestige than others. Moreover, language is deeply embedded in social structures, and those who possess linguistic competence – often in the language of the dominant class – gain social advantages since it allows individuals to assert power, as they are recognized as speaking in a way that is socially valued and authoritative.<sup>13</sup>

However, according to Bourdieu, linguistic competence, is more than knowing the rules of grammar;<sup>14</sup> it involves understanding the social contexts in which language is used. Mastery of a language means knowing how to speak appropriately in different social settings, adhering to the implicit norms of communication, therefore those who can adjust their speech according to the context – whether formal or informal, professional or casual – are exercising cultural capital. This knowledge of when and how to use different registers of language is a critical form of social and cultural power.

Like other forms of cultural capital, linguistic capital can be accumulated and converted into economic and social advantages, which means that those who are fluent in prestigious languages can convert this capital into better job opportunities, higher income, and social mobility.<sup>15</sup> Thus, any “linguistic exchange,” in Bourdieu’s words, “is also an economic exchange,” occurring within a specific symbolic power dynamic between the speaker or “producer,” who possesses linguistic capital, and “a consumer or a market.”<sup>16</sup> In fact, the current dominance of English in global business, science, and education exemplifies Bourdieu’s theory of linguistic capital. English has become a form of symbolic power, not because of any inherent linguistic superiority, but due to historical and political factors,<sup>17</sup> and those who are proficient in English can access global markets and opportunities more easily, reinforcing the idea that mastery of certain languages confers significant social and economic advantages.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> See Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power*, 37.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 76.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 66.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> See Robert B. Kaplan, “Ecolinguistic Aspects of Language Planning,” in *The Routledge Handbook of Ecolinguistics*, eds. Alwin F. Fill and Hermine Perez (Routledge, 2017), 95.

<sup>18</sup> See Bourdieu, 43.

From a slightly different perspective, Chiswick and Miller<sup>19</sup> argue that language skills are a key form of human capital. They meet the three essential criteria for human capital: they are intrinsic to the individual, they are productive in the labor market or in consumption, and they require time and financial investment to acquire. Elaborating on the latter, it is worthwhile referring to Grin's<sup>20</sup> claim that the true role of languages in a global market is that language itself, in fact, constitutes the market. Economic studies typically define a market by four elements: a commodity (goods or services), a set price, a demand forecast (the amount of goods or services consumers are willing to buy at various prices), and a supply forecast (the amount producers are willing to offer at different prices). Accordingly, in the global ecology of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, language serves not only as a medium of exchange but also as a commodity. For example, companies offering language-learning services sell language as a product, with prices based on demand for specific languages (e.g., English, Mandarin), while supply is determined by the availability of teaching resources and expertise. Similarly, translation services cater to a market where the value of linguistic skills is set by demand for cross-border communication, with businesses paying varying rates depending on the complexity and volume of work required.

To conclude, Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital<sup>21</sup> in relation to language, emphasizes how language functions as a key source of social power and inequality, wherein language is not merely a tool for communication but a form of symbolic capital that enhances social positioning and power relations, with those fluent in the dominant language gaining significant social advantages.

### 3. Positioning and Repositioning Oneself through Foreign Language Acquisition

Positioning, as outlined by Davies and Harré,<sup>22</sup> involves situating individuals within conversations as coherent participants in jointly created narratives, influenced by specific discourses. This concept closely aligns with language as symbolic capital,<sup>23</sup> as the way individuals position themselves and others in dialogue can significantly impact social dynamics and power relations. Consequently, in the context of language acquisition, the act of learning a new language becomes not just a matter of acquiring vocabulary and grammar but also a means of reorienting one's identity and social standing.

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<sup>19</sup> Barry R. Chiswick and Paul W. Miller, "The Endogeneity between Language and Earnings," *International Analyses Journal of Labor Economics* 13, no. 2 (1995): 248.

<sup>20</sup> François Grin, "The Economics of Language: Match or Mismatch," *International Political Science Review* 15, no. 1 (1994): 35, <https://doi.org/10.1177/019251219401500103>.

<sup>21</sup> See Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power*.

<sup>22</sup> Bronwin Davies and Rom Harré, "Positioning: The Discursive Production of Selves," *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour* 20, no. 1 (1990): 48, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-5914.1990.tb00174.x>.

<sup>23</sup> See Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power*.

As learners engage with a new language, they are not only developing linguistic skills but are also navigating their own positioning within various cultural and social frameworks.<sup>24</sup> This process of repositioning is crucial, as it allows individuals to redefine their roles in conversations, facilitating interaction in diverse contexts and ultimately transforming their access to social networks and opportunities.<sup>25</sup> Thus, it can be proposed that foreign language acquisition serves as a powerful act of repositioning oneself, thus enabling individuals to leverage their new linguistic abilities as symbolic capital in both personal and professional realms.

Kinginger's research<sup>26</sup> highlights foreign language acquisition as a valuable opportunity for individuals to explore and develop new identities, whereby the study's participant named Alice travels to France to envision herself in a fresh context that expands her social possibilities. Her learning journey is informed by her past experiences of hardship, homelessness, and instability, and her choice of France - shaped by American cultural myths - represents her pursuit of a new, respectable social identity. A somewhat comparable pursuit of repositioning oneself through foreign language acquisition is exemplified by Norton's study of immigrant women in Canada.<sup>27</sup> This aligns with Pavlenko and Blackledge's viewpoint<sup>28</sup> that highlights "a dynamic view of identities, with individuals continuously involved in production of selves, positioning of others, revision of identity narratives, and creation of new ones which valorize new modes of being and belonging." In other words, they perceive identities as social, discursive, and narrative choices provided by a particular society at a specific time and place. Individuals and groups utilize these options to define themselves, characterize their identities, and assert their social spaces and privileges.

To provide additional examples, Rampton's<sup>29</sup> ethnographic observations of multilingual adolescents in the UK demonstrate how young learners use language alternation as a strategy for shifting social personae, positioning themselves fluidly across peer groups and identity registers. A similar process is observed in Miller's research on ESL students in Australian high schools, where learners navigated classroom interactions as sites of identity negotiation.<sup>30</sup> Miller illustrates how these "local sites of representation" are not merely educational spaces but structured social arenas where students perform, assert, or resist social identities shaped by

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<sup>24</sup> See Bonny Norton and Carolyn McKinney, "An Identity Approach to Second Language Acquisition," in *Alternative Approaches to Second Language Acquisition*, ed. Dwight Atkinson (Routledge, 2010).

<sup>25</sup> See Aneta Pavlenko and Adrian Blackledge, "Introduction: New Theoretical Approaches to the Study of Negotiation of Identities in Multilingual Contexts," in *Negotiation of Identities in Multilingual Contexts*, ed. Aneta Pavlenko and Adrian Blackledge (Multilingual Matters, 2004).

<sup>26</sup> Celeste Kinginger, "Alice doesn't Live Here Anymore: Foreign Language Learning and Identity Reconstruction," in *Negotiation of Identities in Multilingual Contexts*, eds. Aneta Pavlenko and Adrian Blackledge (Multilingual Matters, 2004).

<sup>27</sup> Bonny Norton, *Identity and Language Learning: Gender, Ethnicity, and Educational Change* (Longman, 2000).

<sup>28</sup> See Pavlenko and Blackledge, "Introduction: New Theoretical Approaches to the Study of Negotiation of Identities in Multilingual Contexts," 19.

<sup>29</sup> Ben Rampton, *Crossing Language and Ethnicity among Adolescents* (Longman, 1995).

<sup>30</sup> Jenny Miller, "Identity and Language Use: The Politics of Speaking ESL at Schools," in *Negotiation of Identities in Multilingual Contexts*, eds. Aneta Pavlenko and Adrian Blackledge (Multilingual Matters, 2004).

discourses of race, class, and linguistic hierarchy. In another context, Huang's study of Chinese university students<sup>31</sup> learning English reveals how learners engage in foreign language acquisition as a means of pursuing future professional goals and constructing globally oriented identities. Their agency was shaped by both personal aspirations and institutional discourses surrounding employability and success, showing how English functions not only as a communicative tool but also as symbolic capital in a competitive academic and economic landscape. These cases further demonstrate that foreign language learning is embedded in institutional and sociocultural structures, which profoundly influence the subject's potential for identity repositioning.

Likewise, research into English-medium international schools shows how linguistic competence in English allows students to access elite educational and professional pathways, often reorienting their cultural affiliations in the process.<sup>32</sup> Another compelling case emerges from Canada's French immersion programs, where Anglophone learners increasingly pursue bilingualism not as cultural integration, but as a marker of symbolic distinction - reframing second language acquisition as a form of social capital.<sup>33</sup> These examples highlight how foreign language acquisition, embedded in institutional and cultural structures, serves as a tool for reshaping social positioning across different learner populations and national contexts.

In line with that, when Kramsch and Steffensen refer to the sociolinguistic perspective on language as more than merely a means of communication but also a symbolic expression of social and cultural identity (particularly in the contexts that foreign language learners encounter),<sup>34</sup> the scholars suggest that rather than viewing multiple social identities as determined solely by an individual's position in the social world, an ecological paradigm recognizes them as various subject positions that arise from the interaction between the social context and the specific discursive situation.<sup>35</sup>

Moreover, it should be noted that individuals who begin their language acquisition during late childhood, adolescence, or adulthood have already been deeply socialized into one language and culture through their families, schools, and workplaces, the impact of which remains relevant as they try to adopt the verbal and nonverbal behaviors of different speech communities.<sup>36</sup> Therefore, as Lemke<sup>37</sup> points out, an ecological perspective on foreign language learners encompasses not only the immediate context of their learning but also memories of past experiences, expectations for future scenarios, subjective evaluations, and identifications

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<sup>31</sup> Jing Huang, *Autonomy, Agency and Identity in Foreign Language Learning and Teaching* (Peter Lang, 2013).

<sup>32</sup> Robert Phillipson and Tove Skutnabb-Kangas, "Linguistic Imperialism and the Consequences for Language Ecology, in *The Routledge Handbook of Ecological Linguistics*, ed. Alwin F. Fill and Hermine Perez (Routledge, 2017).

<sup>33</sup> David Block and Deborah Cameron, *Globalization and Language Teaching* (Routledge, 2002).

<sup>34</sup> See Kramsch and Steffensen, "Ecological Perspectives on Second Language Acquisition and Socialization," 20.

<sup>35</sup> See *ibid.*, 26.

<sup>36</sup> See *ibid.*, 24-35.

<sup>37</sup> Jay L. Lemke, "Language Development and Identity: Multiple Timescales in the Social Ecology of Learning," in *Language Acquisition and Language Socialization. Ecological Perspectives*, ed. Claire Kramsch (Continuum, 2002).

with both remembered and imagined versions of themselves, thus rendering repositioning of oneself inevitable.

To summarize, when viewed through the lens of ecolinguistics, linguistic phenomena are interconnected, with each element influencing and being influenced by others, in turn shaping foreign language learners' situational positioning. Thus, as individuals acquire a new language, they not only develop linguistic skills but also acquire more symbolic power, which allows them to redefine their roles in social interactions and access to diverse networks.

#### 4. Educational Institutions as Sites of Representation

Steffensen and Fill<sup>38</sup> argue that human communication through language both influences and is influenced by larger social structures, such as institutions, economic systems, and sociocultural resources. This implies that learners' identities and sense of agency are continually shaped by their interactions within these structures, aligning with Hökkä, Eteläpelto, and Rasku-Puttonen's assertion that agency and social structures are "interconnected and mutually shaping."<sup>39</sup> Specifically, learners' identities and agency are affected by the physical, social, and symbolic "affordances" available in their environment.<sup>40</sup> These affordances serve as intentional ways to engage with the environment through observation and resulting actions.<sup>41</sup> As learners participate in educational processes, they interpret and interact with their surroundings, simultaneously perceiving and constructing their identities.

When discussing "social and institutional practices," Miller appeals to the notion of "local sites of representation,"<sup>42</sup> which refer to "semi-autonomous, structured social spaces characterised by discourse and social activity."<sup>43</sup> These sites serve as spaces where identity is performed, where social interactions, cultures, languages, and identities are expressed, and where processes of inclusion and exclusion occur.<sup>44</sup> These are places where spoken discourse may be heard or ignored, recognized or dismissed, and where access to group membership can be granted or denied. Regarding identity negotiation, according to Miller, these sites are intertwined with social and institutional practices that position learners in specific ways, which

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<sup>38</sup> Sunne Vork Steffensen and Alwin F. Fill, "Ecolinguistics: The State of the Art and Future Horizons," *Language sciences* 41 (2014): 12, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.langsci.2013.08.003>.

<sup>39</sup> Päivi Hökkä, Anneli Eteläpelto and Helena Rasku-Puttonen, "The Professional Agency of Teacher Educators amid Academic Discourses," *Journal of Education for Teaching* 38, no. 1 (2012): 85, <https://doi.org/10.1080/02607476.2012.643659>.

<sup>40</sup> See Steffensen and Fill, "Ecolinguistics: The State of the Art and Future Horizons," 7.

<sup>41</sup> See *ibid.*, 13.

<sup>42</sup> Jenny Miller, "Identity and Language Use," 295.

<sup>43</sup> See Vicki Carrington and Allan Luke, "Literacy and Bourdieu's Sociological Theory: A Reframing," *Language and Education* 11, no. 2 (1997): 100.

<sup>44</sup> See Miller, "Identity and Language Use," 295.



some learners may comply with or resist.<sup>45</sup> On a similar note, Lave and Wenger<sup>46</sup> assert that learning is fundamentally connected to social practice, since learning inherently involves the formation of identity, which is seen as the ongoing development of relationships between individuals and their participation and roles within communities of practice.

As Huang<sup>47</sup> observes in the context of higher education, learners often pursue their own agendas in their studies. The scholar's research on EFL (English as a Foreign Language) learners suggests that having a personally relevant and meaningful agenda can enhance learners' sense of agency, ultimately giving them greater control over their education and personal lives in the long term. Huang also notes that learner agendas and agency are closely linked to their self-identity, future aspirations, including career goals, and their overall perceptions of EFL learning.<sup>48</sup> As such, these factors should be viewed as critical influences on learners' development and long-term educational outcomes.<sup>49</sup>

On a similar note, the scholar adds that the environment of educational institutions often involves a conflict between the institutional pragmatic discourse – centered around values, assumptions, and expectations related to external exams, graduate employment rates, and rigorous university evaluations – and the more learner-centered, pro-autonomy discourse, which promotes the exercise of learner identity, agency, and personal agendas.<sup>50</sup> Interestingly, the institutional pragmatic discourse does not always provoke resistance from learners; instead, it often brings together the administration, educators, and students around a common goal.<sup>51</sup> In fact, in Huang's study of EFL and TEFL learners, the success of student agency was significantly shaped by the pragmatic discourse shared by students, educators, and the administration (Huang, 2013, p. 311).<sup>52</sup> Thus, the process of EFL acquisition within the university environment involved a complex interaction between the agendas and agency of all involved parties over time.

This resonates with Cummins' call for a transition from "coercive power dynamics" to "collaborative power dynamics", wherein the latter entails "an affirming relationship between teacher [= educator] and student."<sup>53</sup> He claims that the key to understanding why students either engage academically or, conversely, withdraw from academic effort lies in recognizing that human relationships are central to the educational experience.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> See Miller, "Identity and Language Use: The Politics of Speaking ESL at Schools," 290-97.

<sup>46</sup> Jeann Lave and Etienne J. Wenger, *Situated Learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation* (Cambridge University Press, 1991), 53.

<sup>47</sup> Huang, *Autonomy, Agency and Identity in Foreign Language Learning and Teaching*, 61.

<sup>48</sup> See *ibid.*, 296.

<sup>49</sup> See *ibid.*, 330.

<sup>50</sup> See *ibid.*, 88, 90.

<sup>51</sup> See *ibid.*, 88.

<sup>52</sup> See *ibid.*, 311.

<sup>53</sup> Jim Cummins, *Language, Power and Pedagogy* (Multilingual Matters, 2000), 44.

<sup>54</sup> See *ibid.*, 40.

## Conclusions

This study has attempted to shed light on the intricate relationship between foreign language acquisition and the process of identity repositioning, utilizing both ecolinguistics and Bourdieu's theory of symbolic power to provide a comprehensive perspective. Ecolinguistics reveals that language operates as part of a complex ecological system, where linguistic phenomena are interconnected with social, cultural, and environmental factors. Language learners are influenced by these broader contexts as they adopt a new language, not in isolation but as part of a larger social process. As Haugen's language ecology framework<sup>55</sup> suggests, language interacts with the sociocultural environment, where individuals are continuously navigating power relations, cultural norms, and social expectations.

Bourdieu's theory of symbolic power<sup>56</sup> complements this understanding by illustrating how language functions as a form of cultural capital. Language is more than a medium of communication – it represents social authority and privilege, granting those who master prestigious languages access to power and opportunities. Those fluent in dominant languages, such as English, gain social and economic advantages, positioning themselves favorably in global markets and professional environments. This highlights how foreign language acquisition can be seen as an economic and social investment, where individuals accumulate linguistic capital that can be converted into tangible social mobility and higher status.

Importantly, the process of learning a foreign language also involves repositioning one's identity. As learners gain linguistic competence, they are not only learning to communicate but also reconstructing their roles within various social networks. This realignment involves navigating social norms, adjusting to different cultural frameworks, and reshaping their social standing through the new language. The work of Davies and Harré<sup>57</sup> on positioning as well as Pavlenko and Blackledge's study of identity negotiation<sup>58</sup> elucidate that language users continuously engage in the production of their identities through conversation and discourse, a process that is especially evident in language learners who seek to redefine themselves within new cultural settings.

Additionally, this study has demonstrated how educational institutions play a pivotal role in this process of identity repositioning. Schools, universities, and language learning environments act as spaces where language learners negotiate their identities, often in response to institutional structures and subcultures. As Miller<sup>59</sup> and others have argued, educational spaces serve as sites of representation, where language learners must navigate social inclusion and exclusion while asserting their identities through discourse. The negotiation of identity

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<sup>55</sup> Haugen, *The Ecology of Language: Essays by Einar Haugen*.

<sup>56</sup> Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power*.

<sup>57</sup> Davies and Harré, "Positioning: The Discursive Production of Selves."

<sup>58</sup> Pavlenko and Blackledge, "Introduction: New Theoretical Approaches to the Study of Negotiation of Identities in Multilingual Contexts."

<sup>59</sup> See Miller, "Identity and Language Use."

within these structured environments shapes learners' sense of agency and influences their long-term educational and social outcomes.

Thus, from an ecological perspective, foreign language acquisition can thus be seen as an adaptive response to social, cultural, and economic pressures. Individuals not only acquire new skills but also reconfigure their roles within the broader social fabric, adjusting to new linguistic, cultural, and social norms in a process of continuous evolution. This repositioning is not without its challenges, as learners must balance their pre-existing identities with new ones that emerge in the process of language learning.

In conclusion, as the reviewed prior academic contributions reveal, the act of foreign language acquisition is far more than a simple educational endeavor – it is a transformative process that allows individuals to reposition themselves within their social and cultural worlds. Through the acquisition of linguistic capital, learners gain access to new social, economic, and cultural networks, reshaping their identities in ways that enhance their symbolic and practical power. The interconnected nature of language and identity, as seen through the frameworks of ecolinguistics and symbolic power, provides a robust foundation for understanding how language acquisition can facilitate both personal and social evolution.

Nevertheless, this research also underscores the need for further empirical studies that examine the lived experiences of foreign language learners across diverse cultural and educational contexts. By deepening our understanding of how learners navigate identity shifts, power dynamics, and social positioning through language, future research can provide valuable insights into the role of language education in fostering social mobility, cultural integration, and personal empowerment. Moreover, examining how language acquisition intersects with broader societal issues such as migration, globalization, and economic inequality will be crucial in advancing both theoretical and practical knowledge in the field of language education and social identity.