SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION IN TEAHING ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

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ABSTRACT: This article tries to answer some of the following questions : Why is it that some individuals are more successful than others in mastery of a second language? Why does one person seem to learn faster than another even if both are in the same situation? Or why does a person become more proficient in some parts of the language system (i.e., oral production and aural comprehension) than in other parts (i.e., written production and reading comprehension)? These are questions that linguists and language teachers have been asking for years. Recently several models of the second language acquisition process have been developed in an attempt to explain the interaction of variables which affect second language acquisition and the cognitive strategies that determine the form and course of acquisition. Because second language (L2) acquisition is a very complex process, no one model yet captures all of its facets. The purpose of this paper is to survey some of the current research and to review several models of L2 acquisition. The emphasis will be on the role of the learner rather than that of the teacher.

KEY WORDS: Acquisition, Second, Model

A. INTRODUCTION

This article begins with the term "L2 learner" which will be used to refer to the person who is in the process of adding a second language. L2 acquisition is taken to mean adding a second language (L2) once a learner has a fairly good notion of his first language (L1). Linguists today generally believe that L1 and L2 acquisition are similar processes-learners in both go through a series of stage in which they formulate linguistic rules, try them out for themselves, and produce a language system that approximates but does not match the adult or native model. By forming and testing hypotheses, the learner plays an active role in the creation of his own language system.

1. Krashen's Monitor Model

Krashen (1981) distinguishes between two independent, but interrelated, systems for internalizing rules of second language: acquisition, which is

subconscious, and learning, which is conscious. Adults may use both systems, but children generally acquire L2 just as they do L1. Acquirers use their intuitive, implicit knowledge of the language, whereas learners use their formal, explicit knowledge. Acquisition occurs in a natural environment; for example, an immigrant picks up English while living and working in the United States. Learning usually occurs in a formal environment: a high school student learns French while studying one hour a day in a classroom. Just as acquisition can occur without formal learning, so learning does not always become acquisition: for example, an L2 learner may know the rule for third person singular but still omit the –s when he speaks or writes. According to Krashen, the acquired system initiates an utterance for meaningful communicative purposes, while the learned system monitors the output, if there is time to focus on form over communication, and the learner know the rule. Thus, acquisition-learning distinction is central to Krashen's Monitor Model.
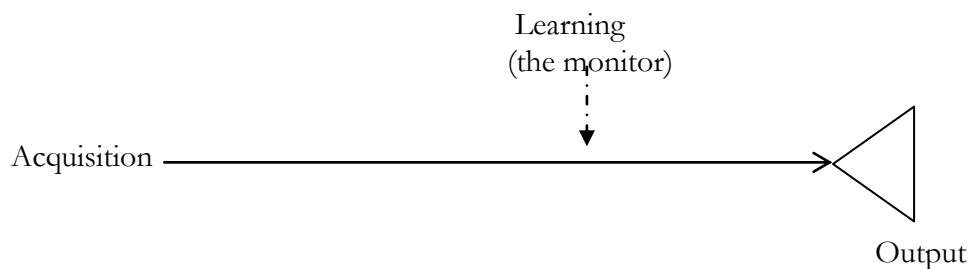

Fig. 1 The Monitor Model

There is a great deal of individual variation in use of the Monitor. Monitor over-users are so rule-conscious that they are hesitant in speaking. Under-users make flagrant errors and seem immune to error correction, but they get their message across. Optimal users monitor when they know the rule, have time to apply it, and are concerned with form. Even native speakers monitor such things as "I" vs. "me" or "lie" vs. "lay."

2. Evidence for the Monitor Model

McLaughlin (1978) reviews the evidence on which the Monitor Model is based. Morpheme studies have shown a natural sequence of acquisition of grammatical morphemes for L2 very similar to that for L1 (Dulay and Burt, 1978; Bailey, Madden, and Krashen, 1978). There is a question as to whether the natural order is disrupted by learning because most of the L2 studies in the United States look at a mixed type of learner, who is receiving formal instruction while living in a naturalistic English-speaking environment. However, a recent study by Felix suggests

that the natural order is followed regardless of learning situation. She found that German high school students in a first-year English class using a traditional audio-lingual approach "seem to pass through much the same sequence of developmental stages as Ll learners and they produce-with few exceptions-types of structures very similar to those observable in first language acquisition" (Felix, 1981: 92). Despite differences in learning situation and methodology, L2 learners use similar learning processes and approaches. In fact, it may not be possible to control the students' verbal behavior in the classroom. L2 learners, even in a behavioristic classroom, rely not on habit formation processes but on a creative construction process.

Further evidence for the Monitor comes from studies of child-adult differences in L2 acquisition. There is evidence that older learners acquire a second language faster than younger ones, but people who begin a second language during childhood ultimately attain a higher level of proficiency. Snow and "Hoefnagel-Hòhle (1982) studied English-speaking subject living in Holland and acquiring Dutch with little or no formal Instruction. The 12 to 15 years old showed the most rapid acquisition for all the skills tested, and the 3 to 5-year,-olds the slowest. Asher and Price (1982) found that adults learning listening comprehension of Russian were superior to children. Fathman (1982) found that children aged 11-15 years were more successful in learning morphology and syntax while children aged 6-10 years more successful in learning phonology. Biological, cognitive and affective differences have all been posited sources for these age-related differences.

Lenneberg's critical period theory (1967) stated that children are biological tuned to acquiring L1. For the child, language acquisition is implicit; it is a product of maturation. Because of chemical changes and lateralization of the brain of puberty, after puberty language must be learned explicitly, through memorization and conscious rule learning. This notion of a critical period has been challenged in recent years. Krashen (1981) believes that cerebral dominance is already established at age 5 and may even be present at birth; thus it does not account for difficulties in L2 acquisition after puberty.

The cognitive explanation attributes the general increase in language learning ability as children get older to the development of the formal operational stage around age 12. Adolescents are more able to use abstract rules to solve problems. Krashen (1982) asserts that formal operations allow the development of conscious grammar, a meta-awareness of language. Adults are faster learners because they can profit from grammatical explanations and think deductively. The Monitor model

predicts that this rate advantage is only temporary because children outperform adults in L2 over the long run.

There are also affective consequences of formal operations, but these negatively affect acquisition for the older learner. Krashen suggests that pronunciation may be harder to acquire after puberty because it is deeper in the center of one's personality than any other aspect of language. Increased self-consciousness and lowered self-image at adolescence may strengthen the affective filter and thus reduce the amount of input the acquirer receives.

Aptitude and attitude studies are also cited as evidence supporting the Monitor Model. Aptitude tests of grammatical sensitivity, inductive ability, and verbal intelligence seem to relate directly to conscious language learning. Attitudinal factors such as motivation and personality relate directly to acquisition and only indirectly to learning (e.g. attitude toward classroom learning or toward the teacher). The motivated learner, who wants to integrate into the target culture or to achieve proficiency or some utilitarian purpose, will encourage intake. Likewise, the self-confident or emphatic person will be receptive to intake because he has a "low affective filter" (Krashen 1981).

3. The Bialystok Model

Bialystok (1978) is interested in the cognitive processes that describe how people learn a second language. She uses many of Krashen's ideas in her model of second language acquisitions. The model is organized on three levels -input, knowledge, and output (Fig. 2). Language exposure (input) may occur through books, in a classroom, or by immersion in the target culture. This information is stored in some form, (knowledge). Most of the input gained in a formal classroom such as grammar rules, pronunciation rules, or new vocabulary is stored first as explicit knowledge and later transferred to implicit linguistic knowledge, but some remains there indefinitely and has to be consciously recalled. Input gained in a natural setting, along with that transferred from the explicit knowledge, is stored in the implicit linguistic knowledge and can be used for most spontaneous compre-hension and production task (output). These two knowledge systems are similar to Krashen's learned and acquired systems.
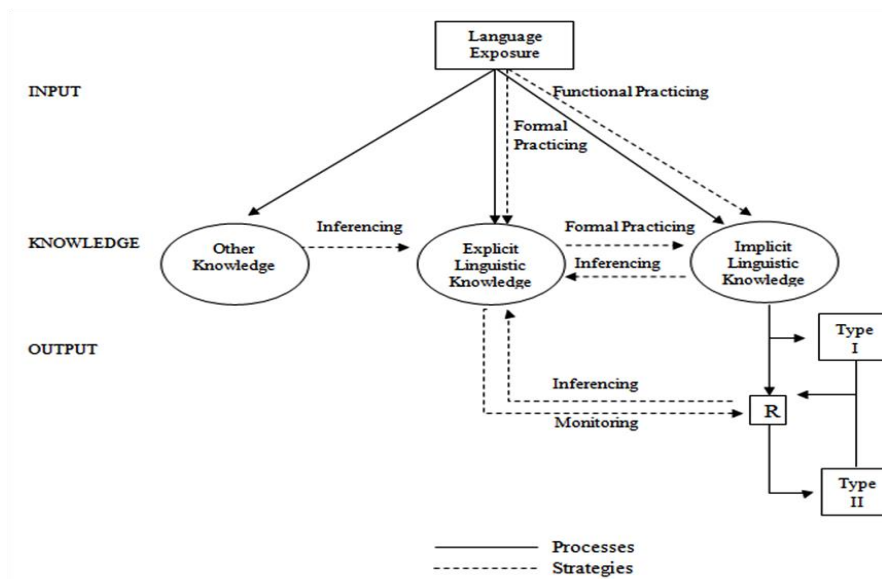
Fig. 2 The Bialystok Model

But Bialystok's model also includes other knowledge, such as one's native language, information about the target culture, general experiences of the world, etc. It is this component, which helps to explain individual differences in L2 success.

In this model there are four strategies by which the L2 learner uses input to generate output: formal practice - studying a grammar book or using language drills and exercises; functional practice - increasing exposure to the language through movies, talking or reading; monitoring - using conscious knowledge to modify or correct output; and inferencing - using information from several sources to arrive at some explicit knowledge. The more strategies the L2 learner can choose from, the more successful he will be.

4. Societal and Affective Considerations

Schumann has written extensively about the relationship of the affective domain to L2 acquisition. His model (Fig.3) shows his interest in the concepts of acculturation, motivation, and empathy (1976). He looks at societal factors such as dominance, life style, enclosure, cohesiveness, congruence, attitudes, and length of residence in the target culture - all of which interact to produce good or bad learning situations.

WHY?   HOW?   WHAT?

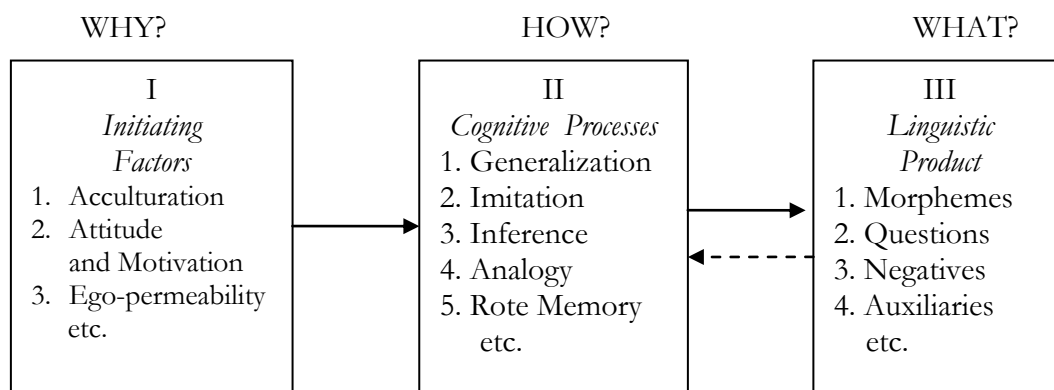| I
Initiating
Factors
1. Acculturation
2. Attitude
   and Motivation
3. Ego-permeability
   etc. | II
Cognitive Processes
1. Generalization
2. Imitation
3. Inference
4. Analogy
5. Rote Memory
   etc. | III
Linguistic
Product
1. Morphemes
2. Questions
3. Negatives
4. Auxiliaries
   etc. |

Fig. 3 Schumann's Model

An example of a bad L2 learning situation is an American, who is considered dominant, living temporarily in Saudi Arabia, where the culture is very different and there is high enclosure; as a result, little L2 acquisition occurs. An example of a good situation is an American Jewish immigrant to Israel, where the cultures are considered equal and there is cohesiveness and congruence; as a result, L2 acquisition is likely to be successful.

For Schumann (1975) empathy is essential to learning L2. He quotes Guia, "to learn a second language is to take on a new identity". The L2 learner needs "ego permeability" to enable him to partially give up his separateness of identity from the target language group. The problem is that just as he most needs ego flexibility in order to learn L2, the L2 learner is most likely to be experiencing culture shock. Adults especially may feel disoriented, anxious, and ashamed of their insufficiency in the target language and culture. These affective factors are more likely to inhibit cognitive processes in adults than in children. However, children can be influenced by unfavorable parental attitudes toward the target language or its speakers.

Gardner and Lambert's research with attitudes and motivation (1972) is widely quoted. It is Gardner's model which Schumann (1975) presents (Fig. 4). This model has four components: social milieu, individual differences, second-language acquisition contexts, and linguistic outcomes.
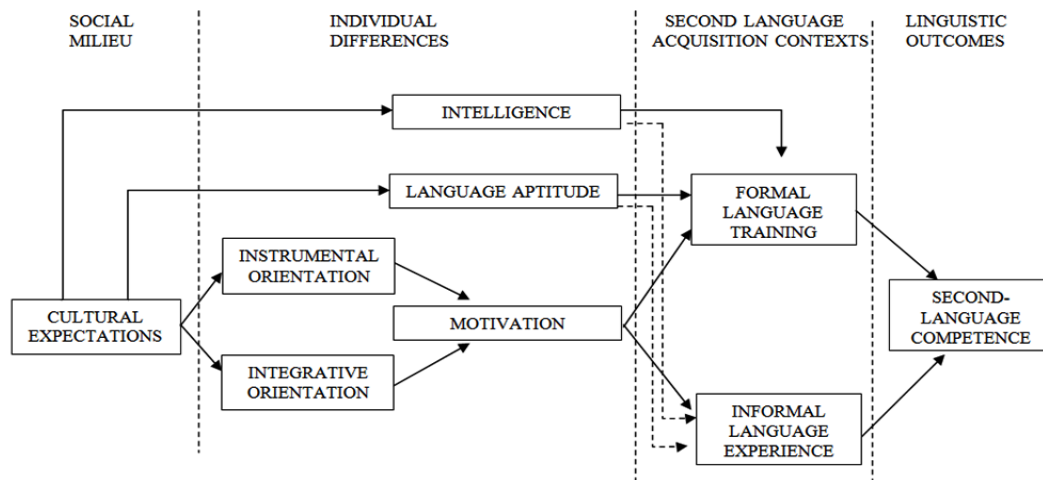
Fig. 4 Gardner's Model

The social milieu, as described above, influences the way one positively or negatively values the target culture. Negative attitudes toward, or from, the target culture adversely affect the L2 acquisition process. Individual differences include intelligence and language aptitude (which are fixed characteristics that are most influential on classroom learning) and integrative and instrumental motivation (which can be increased and which contribute to both formal and informal learning). The L2 acquisition contexts can be formal language formal training or informal language experience (seem to be similar to Krashen's two kinds of input). The linguistic outcome of these factors is varying degrees of second-language competence.

5. Individual Styles

Filmore (1982) engaged in a longitudinal study of individual differences among Spanish-speaking and Chinese-speaking children learning English in immersion and bilingual programs in California. She looked at the relationship, between learner characteristics (social and cognitive) and situational characteristics (setting-opportunity to hear and learn English). Results indicated, first that there was no single characteristic of good learners. Generally, good learners seem to be outgoing, verbal, analytical, and curious. But some are quiet, studious, and attentive. More of the poor are bad guessers, lack social skills to interact with peers or adults, and are not engaged linguistically or academically. Second, there was not a simple relationship between situational and learning variables and speed of learning. The Chinese children in her study, who more of ten turn to adults for guidance and support, seem to learn faster in a highly structured English-immersion or bilingual

class, but not in an open-classroom. The Spanish children in her study, who tend to turn to peers for ideas and direction, seem to learn less English in a bilingual class, which does not have good models to follow, and to learn more in an open classroom, which provides interaction with native speakers.

Many researchers today are asking learners to report on their own linguistic behavior. Stevick (1981) comments that everyone thinks the way he learns is natural and wonders, why others do not follow the same approach. From interviews with four gifted adult language learners, he concludes that differences among learners are qualitative, not quantitative. The first L2 learner learns aurally. By listening totally and-blocking out competing sounds, he takes in a great deal of data and then consciously synthesizes it. The second L2 learner associates with native speakers and has had no formal language learning. He does no conscious processing of language and, does not try to memorize. The third L2 learner does not relate very well with the L2 community. He learns by listening and repeating, beginning with simple sentences, with constant correction by the teacher. The fourth l2 learner first tries, to get an intellectual understanding of the structure of the language, then talks to a native and reads in the target language.

In the work of Azhar Arsyad[1] who interviews several L2 learners who have been living in the United States for five or more years, I found similar variations. Majid, from Iran, is like Stevik's second learner. He associates with native speakers and is only now beginning to study English in the classroom. He lacks the explicit knowledge of linguistic rules needed to monitor. Although his speaking and listening skills are excellent, he is very weak in reading and writing. Kazuko, from Japan, is like Stevik's fourth learner. She has a good accent, is fluent, and monitors effectively. She is now a graduate student, teaching speech communication to American college students. When Kazuko cannot find a rule to explain some linguistics phenomenon, she creates her own rule. To illustrate, gerunds or infinitives are obligatory in certain contexts. The native speaker chooses 'I admit taking it' or 'I promise to see you' without hesitation. Even Kazuko's 12-year old son can produce these structures correctly and spontaneously. But Kazuko has used inferencing strategies to devise her own rule that verbs referring to past acts take gerunds while those referring to the future take infinitives. Trinh, from Vietnam, also does not know a rule for

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[1] Azhar Arsyad, Interviews made in the USA when he studied there in1993 and I accomponied him for three months

gerunds and infinitives, so he avoids the situation. Instead of "I promise to see you," he says, "I promise I will see you." In other instances he transfers from Vietnamese if he does not know the correct word or structure in English. Because he works and socializes with Americans and read English newspapers and magazines, he receives a great deal of input. He is fluent and has a good accent. Ngoc, who came Vietnam seven years ago at age 12, is also fluent, gets good grades in college work, but has poor pronunciation ability. On a recent language proficiency test she confused an -ing verb and an –ed verb because to her they sound the same. She did not use explicit knowledge to determine whether active or passive voice was obligatory in that context. She made no attempt to use conscious language rules, but rather guessed randomly on any test item that was not in her implicit linguistic knowledge.[2]

Although these four L2 learners come from different cultural backgrounds, they share some characteristics. Each learned English in a natural setting, and each is outgoing and verbal and thus open to input. Seliger (1977) would classify them as high input generators – learners who practice by initiating interactions. In contrast, low input generators do little to initiate situations which cause input to be directed to them. In the classroom high input generators are actively involved by calling out,

working out answers to questions directed to others, or talking to themselves during language drills. At the same time, low input generators are sitting quietly, participating only when specifically called on. Seliger concludes that whereas a child acquires L1 automatically from exposure, an adult has the option of retreating from language interaction. An adult must do something active that involves him cognitively in the process.

6. Creative Construction Process

Studies of second language errors also provide evidence of strategies used in language acquisition. Contrastive analysis, which looked at errors as evidence of interference from L1, was popular several years ago. More recent studies consider errors not as transfer from L1 but as evidence of overgeneralization and rule simplification, strategies also used by L1 learners. A study by Dulay and Burt (1974) shows that most errors made by children learning English as a second language can be explained by the creative construction process. This is "a process in which children gradually reconstruct rules for the speech they hear, guided by universal innate mechanisms which cause them to use certain strategies to organize that

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[2] *Ibid*

linguistic input, until the mismatch between the language system they are exposed to and what they produce is resolved" (p.255).

Selinker (1975) has called this developing language "inter-language". As the L2 learner becomes more proficient, he moves through Interlanguage 1, IL2, IL3, etc., each more closely approximating the target language. Even the final interlanguage will remain different in some respects from native speakers' speech because of the persistence of some errors which have become "fossilized".

Dulay and Burt's model (Fig.5) reflects their conclusion that the L2 learner, especially a child, gradually reconstructs the L2 system using cognitive strategies. The characteristics of this active, creative process can be inferred from descriptions of the L2 learner's developing language (interlanguage) and of the input which shapes the interlanguage. In this model the source of language input can be peers, teachers, parents, etc. It can be natural speech, pattern drills, etc. The frequency and length of exposure also affect the input. The creative construction, process involves both universal strategies and variations in learning style. Data revealing inter-language includes error analysis, acquisition sequences, and frequency of structure types produced without error.

Language Input ⟶ Creative Construction Process ⟶ Interlanguage

Fig. 5 Dulay and Burt's model

B. CONCLUSION

Certain themes run through all of the literature reviewed in this paper. Although some researchers may use the terms learning and acquisition synonymously, they recognize a distinction between explicit knowledge, which is consciously learned in a formal setting, and implicit knowledge which is unconsciously acquire in a natural setting. Different researchers focus on different variables which affect the L2 acquisition experience. The context for acquisition is an important variable because it provides input. The process of acquisition, whether by conscious or unconscious strategies, is another important variable. Learner variables including age, aptitude, cognitive style, attitude, motivation, and previous language experience all affect acquisition. These sets of variables interact in a number of ways and account for the infinite diversity in each person's L2 acquisition experience.

While this is true, it also seems true that we may be prewired to acquire language in one way regardless of variables; perhaps everyone uses similar strategies

at similar stages as he creatively constructs his version of the new language. There is need for continuing research to discover what linguistic or psychological factors all L2 learners share in common.

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