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Language Acquisition Theories, Process and its Stages

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Abstract: *It has been an interesting field for researchers of language to find out ways to acquire a language efficiently and effectively. The last few decades have been critically important from the viewpoint of enunciation of theories on the acquisition of language. Some pioneers of linguistics have strived to bring forth certain factors which are conducive to accelerating the acquisition of a language. Though in recent decades, the acquisition theories have evolved and have assumed new shapes, however, all of them stand defined against the theoretical frameworks projected by B.F Skinner and Noam Chomsky. It has also been established that for the acquisition of language, one has to undergo the specific process of stepping ahead stage-wise before one acquires efficiency in speech and script. The study in hand incorporates to determine the milestones in the way of acquisition of language.*

Key Words: English Language, Theory, Language Acquisition

Introduction

Language is a natural phenomenon of human beings and an essential source of the exchange of views. There is no culture on earth that does not have a language. Language enhances humans' way of thinking and directs them to cope with all their matters. It transfers tradition, culture and civilization (Bolinger, 1968). Language is, basically, an intrinsic human phenomenon, spoken or written amongst a social group. It's a way of expressing thought & ideas, a source of representation of culture, norms and traditions. Language does not exist apart from culture. Edward Sapir (1884-1939) and Benjamin Lee Whorf (1897-1941) thought their studies highlighted the interconnection between language and culture, giving their view that it was impossible to determine or appreciate both language and culture without having knowledge of each other (Wardhaugh, 2002).

Researchers believe that children have to learn their mother language first. Language learning even begins from the mother's womb. It has a tremendous impact on the creation of the individual. Through our mother tongue, we hear the lovely voices of our mother and become familiar with them. A kid's personal and psychological development is always influenced by what is

communicated through the mother tongue (Guvercin, Hurisa 2015). Children start learning voices, words, and phrases, and at last, they become able to learn whole sentences through imitation (Tomasello M. 2000). Thus, finally, they become well conversant in the art of communication and become fluent in giving vent to their thoughts.

Literature Review

The infants absorb knowledge from their mother language by the natural process of imitation and mimicry as their mind is a *tabula rasa*. When infants attain a language, the natural process of their learning ends, while in learning a second language, it is artificially adopted with the help of the first language from the known to the unknown. In the case of adults, they have to listen to noisy voices in spite of clear sounds like children have. Adults observe logical reasoning and grammar-translation or indirect method of learning in spite of imitation. Adults can learn a second language more quickly than children (E. V. Gatenby, 1956)

Behaviourism Learning Theory focuses on human behaviour as a product of stimulus-response interaction. According to behaviourism learning theory, results can be measured, seen, evaluated, and tested objectively. To get the desired behaviour, the expressions and articulations are required to be reiterated to develop certain behaviour in the learners, which is conducive to the speedy learning of language. In this way, the desired behaviour can be developed through positive reinforcement (Skinner, 1976).

A child's mother language is also called native language or first language as it is the language used by its parents. Usually, parents never intend to teach their native language to their children. Rather they put their efforts into reinforcing their child's verbal behaviour with soft speaking and smiling or other means like "baby speak" to abridgement of

the gulf between the learner and the language skills so that fluency could be achieved (Varshney, 2003).

It is the capacity of a child who learns a language genetically through inheritance. In childhood, the boys and girls get linguistic skills through communication with the other members of society. However, the same is acquired with the help of their innate capacity, which they were born with Chomsky (2009). Language is, therefore, a habit that develops with the nourishment of a child in correlation with his stages of growth. This implies that language learning is concerned with the naturalistic way in which children acquire, produce, and experience interaction from beginning to end as long as they survive.

Many studies have tried to locate the nature and components of linguistic capacity in order to better understand language acquisition and development. (Stanborough, R. 2019) the book of Noam Chomsky, "Syntactic Structures," was published in 1957, and it proposed the apprehension of the language in humans right from their birth since "Vygotsky believed that language develops from social interactions, for the purpose of communication" McLeod, S. A. (2007).

Noam Chomsky puts forth that all human beings possess an inborn capability for decoding and understanding language. There is universal grammar which entails inferring such laws of learning a local language with the help of the brain through using a Language Acquisition Device. They are capable of developing LAD in their heads to construct our sentences over time through practice.

In the context of historical debate and disagreement between Chomsky and Skinner, it has been noted that when the discussion continues to some length, it gets rounded and at the end, both BF. Skinner and Noam Chomsky are expressing just one and

the same idea, but they are putting things forward from different angles, but the dice are being rolled in the same corner. The infrastructure which exists in the mind of a person is, according to Chomsky, at the heart of the debate that does not always contradict Skinner's stance.

Skinner's theory implicitly posits some form of natural infrastructure that makes the human animal sensitive and responsive to stimuli, which he can describe as a theory to be known as 'operant stimulus', making it integrated with the superstructure of his theory.

At least two things are implied by Chomsky's thesis of 'stimulus poverty.' For starters, it creates the impression that one understands exactly the requirement of lingual construction in the mind of a learner. Furthermore, this has deeper implications and misconceptions. Let's assume that the assertion "poverty of stimulus" means an amount of the stimuli a kid is brought face to face with that, and the same is significantly lower than that of any other known amount, i.e. linguistic stimuli in adult human beings' social environments. It would imply that certain stimuli of individual found in the life of an individual and the same has grown in his language from the child. Chomsky's as such linguistic rationality is, in the end, a respectable, well-bred biologism, despite the fact that his critique of the behavioristic approach is not unreasonable.

It seems advisable to take into account the following issues before proceedings on further discussion. Certain flaws are inherent in the conceptual structure that underpins the production and behaviour in the pertinent area of modern linguistic theory.

A language student ought to take into account the idea of 'language of natives' or the language used by the parents. He or she is incapable of representing or communicating the reality to which it refers. This idea must be rejected as being non-

potential and ineffective. It is based on the prevalent view as a language is initially learnt in approximately ordinary operating circumstances, which are favourable for learning a mother tongue. This denial has nothing to do about the validity of the premise that underpins the idea of "mother tongue" - namely, that the child's first language is that of their mother.

It's more tied to the idea that the unique characteristics of individuals must never be sought in the biological components of their life. In this context, it should be emphasized that the strong argument for the rejection of the idea of "native language" has, first and foremost, a philosophical relevance. The notion of 'native language,' in a view, is one of those thoughts and linguistics structures that are built on the workstations of humanities in general and linguistics in particular.

Yet, this is true. On one hand that the idea is incredibly popular right now, especially in today's Western countries, and on the other side, it is closely linked to the expected solutions to community issues, for example, the large number of people compared with the small different cultural units. Every individual has the right to be educated in his or her "mother tongue," absorption of linguistics and cultural habits, and so on, which necessitates us to be sensitive to the sufferings of others and feel and express what we feel in that exclusive situation and prevailing circumstances.

Evolution Of Language Acquisition Theories

Fries (1945) began to develop language pedagogical practices centred on behaviourism with the argument that any foreign language can be accurately learnt through habit formation. He further argues that a cautious contrast should be observed between the first and second language to

make the difference between the both clear to the learner.

Skinner (1957) contends that through thorough exposition, a learner adopts explicitly a certain behaviour which expedites his language learning process, and it occurs due to stimulus-response and reinforcement. Thus a learner gets into the habit of speaking a language. The study in reference isn't specifically about L2 acquisition, but it's mentioned along with its early impact on the SLA domain.

Going through the behaviourist theory, Lado (1957) examines that any pair of languages has its differences in most of their linguistics areas where the learner would struggle and where the instructor should focus so that any change of borrowing words from one language to another could be avoided. It has been named the 'Contrastive Analysis.'

Chomsky (1959) delivers a scathing attack on Skinner (1957), claiming: that toddlers do have some intrinsic ability that guides students in their language learning since they consistently produce innovative sentences and rules rather than just imitating the language among them. Universal Grammar will be the name given to this intrinsic linguistic capacity (Universal Grammar). Chomsky has not discussed the acquisition of a second language here. However, the theory he has presented has influenced the subject and led to the abandoning of behaviourism as a justification for the SLA procedure.

Lado (1964) builds on the idea of structuralism relating to linguistics and has focused on behaviourism, establishing a pedagogical technique based on the knowledge of relating to language learning, as he did in his prior work. He has emphasized the use of audio-lingual techniques.

In controversy to Lado as well as popular thought of behaviouristic approach at the time, Newmark (1966) suggests that in any classroom, a language teacher should let the process of learning go on without monitoring it, typically using the behaviouristic approach deploying any audio-lingual method. It is a really significant shift from the formal prescribed language learning process.

Corder (1967) has remarkably expressed that first of all, we should emphasize the correction of learners' mistakes because it becomes clear that a large amount of them do not originally come inside the students' learning' native language, and also that students appear to use their own built-in syllabus, as per the suggestion of Chomsky (1959), while discussing the process of acquiring the first language.

Following Chomsky's'revolution,' Lenneberg (1967) proposes that an innate faculty of language learning do neurologically exist, and it gets stimulation so that the first language is automatically learnt by a child in such a way as a child develops in him other habits of moving and apprehending everything that exists in his environment.

Selinker (1972) used the word 'Interlanguage', referring to it as a second language learner's emerging framework, based upon the work of Corder (1967). For both theoretical and practical grounds, this phrase places a strong focus on the student system in and of itself, capturing the image of a second language, which the scholars eager to shift off any two languages which might have desired to be analyzed and contrasted.

Dulay (1973) and Burt (1973) carried out the first significant research in response to Corder's (1967) invitation to investigate learners' blunders. They claim that just 3% of L2 mistakes can be traced all the way back to their L1 and that the majority of faults are developed as a consequence of learners' habit of using language. In this way, the kids have a lot of such material relating to the construction of the sentence and start taking

it. They look into Roger Brown's (1973) results wherein the first language a child acquires contains grammatical morphemes in a very well sequence, and the child discovers comparable patterns in the second language.

Bailey et al. (1974) duplicate morpheme investigations of Dulay and Burt (1973) about the mature learners of the second language and consider it fully comparable with the outcomes of learning the first language. The writers deploy the very approach, Bilingual Syntax Measure, that has been criticized both at the time and thereafter. The morpheme research is crucial because it demonstrates the acquisition of the first as well as that of the second is not much dissimilar as previously thought, in which both are learnt through internal capability instead of the environment. Under reference investigation of L2 learners' mistakes, Richards (1974) brings the results on learners' errors further than the research lab and into the classroom, resulting in a hugely effective book for the researchers of Second Language Acquisition and the instructors at the same time.

Schumann (1978) finds resemblance in early languages to pidgins before they became increasingly complicated. The process is the same as that of creolization. His emphasis is on the research of L2 development. Further, the writer says that the learners of a second language are supposed to be more connected to their chosen language, which is rather certain to proceed beyond pidgin. He thinks it to be the result of acculturation.

In SLA, Bialystok (1978) is one who, for the first time, made an effort to distinguish between the implicit subconscious and explicit conscious information, claiming that both are intertwined. Both kinds of information are a distinction from each other and have sparked a lot of speculation, such as Krashen (1981) contends that any conscious learning process does not move one to a subconscious learning process.

Early on, Giv'on (1979) claims that learner speech mimics the 'pragmatic style' of informal communication, focusing largely on context. He compares this with many common patterns of 'syntactic mode' that primarily depend on codes and structures of grammar. In what will subsequently be described as the functionalist tradition, writers like Huebner (1983), Dittmar (1984), and Sato (1990) use and refine the paradigm in the specific variety at a minor level about research on the second language.

Long (1980), in his PhD dissertation, lays the groundwork that is meant for the researcher who follows this research paradigm. For example, Long (1996) did about the importance of beginning communication for learning a Second - language. The above writer demonstrates through his study that all the learners seem to be dynamic participants rather than passive consumers of input in Second - language interactions, manipulating the material to enhance comprehension at the present progressive stage.

Krashen (1981) presents the popular Monitor Model that posits; that 'learning' is a distinct procedure from acquisition if viewed on a theoretical level. The acquisition is a process of sub-consciousness in which a child develops certain grammar meant for a second language, while cognitive understanding (for example, grammar rules) seems to have no bearing on this procedure. It can only be used to 'monitor' (and, if required, adjust) output after the acquired system has created an utterance.

Meisel et al. (1981) discovered that the educational way with clarity in acquiring a language is not beneficial. It has been proved in certain studies conducted in German, Italian, Portuguese and Spanish language as the people who migrated from various countries to Germany could not learn the German language easily through teaching.

Dulay et al. (1982) broadened the scope of morpheme research (Dulay & Burt 1973) to include bigger gatherings of youngsters as well as a variety of the first language. The findings of the writers show that regardless of L1 or host environment, students learn 13 morphemes of English in the same sequence. They also come to the conclusion that the first language has less contribution to the acquisition of the second language, so the majority of mistakes are developed due to this factor. The first milestone for SLA theorization in the generative custom will influence in the next decade or so.

First of all, the model of second language acquisition from the generative point of view was used by Flynn (1983). In her dissertation for PhD, she considers the impact of Universal Grammar Theory on learning / acquiring the second language, especially if the second language has any effect on the first language of the learners. She believes that languages of all communities use the same grammatical pattern, which applies almost to most of the languages of the world. There is a little bit of variation which can be observed in this regard. Resetting is feasible, according to her, and occurs quite early when the parameter is used (this governs the sequence of elements of a written or spoken language). In two respects, the act of investigation seems to be significant. We find existing in it a systematic charter which compares and contrasts the first and the second language that can be confirmed from several empirical studies.

While discussing at length the development of frameworks, other theoretical styles are also taken into account. Hyltenstam (1984), for example, connects developmental trends in L2 acquisition to universal typological trends in languages throughout the world. He demonstrates that the learners of a second language succeed in acquiring desired structures (phrases and clauses). These are related to the number of global languages which are desired to be learned. Using typological universals to describe L2 acquisition has become a rather fruitful avenue of inquiry that is still going strong today.

As far as the ability to learn and teach is concerned, its development at various phases has been examined by Pienemann (1984). It includes such concerns as the claim that students can only understand the next stage once the previous one has been mastered. To date, there has been very little attempt to integrate L2 developmental research into instructional difficulties.

Swain (1985) contends that in order to acquire high-level communications skills in the L2, learners must not just understandable language input but also the ability to make output. This is based on studies relating to the exposure of the students in Canada (where the students were apprised about the scholastic topics in L2 French) who achieve near-native-like understanding but fall short of native-like proficiency in their productive capacities. In Swain 1995, she expands on this approach.

McLaughlin (1987) defies the trend, arguing that L2 learning entails procedures that are at first governed by short-term memory, but it, with the reiterated movement go, is automatized. This process shifts then to the long-term memory, which can reproduce it briskly and quite easily, and no laborious attention is then required. Restructuring occurs by converting it into other language patterns, which are absorbed into the whole systematic procedure.

Bley-Vroman (1989) considers many major distinctions which can be traced between the acquisition of the first and the second language as in both the languages, there is an underlying common relation that of Universal Grammar, which lends credence to using common learning models of psychology to describe Second Language Acquisition. His 'basic difference theory' says that UG can describe L1 learning but that

generic cognitive processes are responsible for L2 acquisition. This line of inquiry will gain traction, leading toward the development of constructionist or emergentist language acquisition theories about the setting of a second language.

White (1989), after a thorough examination of the numerous possibilities regarding the function of Universal Grammar in the acquisition of a second language, provides the conceptual groundwork for most of the subsequent research in this incredibly fertile domain.

According to Johnson (1989), the UG supports the acquisition of L1 and L2. According to him, if there is a 'critical moment' during which it must be active, it is a key topic underpinning major work of generative grammatic framework. Johnson and Newport present a comparison of the structures of English grammar items in the second language acquisition with that of the first with regard to varying ages. Too far, the focus has been on general trends among L2 learners, with little consideration devoted to personal diversity. Skehan (1989) looks at the effect of individual variability in second language learning.

Schmidt (1990) also uses psychological conceptions to describe the second language acquiring process and claims that necessary input for comprehension is insufficient; it must be transformed into the intake, which is accomplished by 'noticing,' or recording a shape in its input.

Cook (1991) claims that one mind with a bilingual approach is more than just the sum of two monolingual brains. Not only does the first language influence the second language, but the second language also influences the first, which has substantial consequences for something like a conception of cognitive grammar as a single.

This comprehensive program of the second language was launched on a larger scale by the European Science Foundation from 1982 to 1986, and organizing researchers from 5 nations in European and 10 ten pairs of languages gives the functionalistic approach that is really a considerable boost. Klein (1992) and Perdue (1992) discovered that every learner has to undergo the three stages, namely Nominal Utterance Organisation of the adverbs, nouns, particles which are not connected, secondly Infinite Utterance Organisation where the verbs play an important role in the structure of utterances, and thirdly Finite Utterance Organisation where the main role rests with the verbs that begin structuring utterances, but they continue to stay untensed (tensed verbs appear). The project's exceptional scale and scope, which includes several unrelated languages, allows for long-term generalizations and gives a highly rich dataset that may be utilized by other scholars conducting research on like subjects.

Turaeva Guzal Xursanovna and Avlaeva Saida Bozorovna (2022) have found that the studies of the complexity of skilled speakers' linguistic skills and knowledge as well as analyses of their own linguistic intuitions provide a large portion of the data used by linguists who adopt an innatist stance. Those who disagree with this viewpoint contend that it is important to understand the developmental processes that led to this degree of mastery rather than focusing just on the ultimate state of knowledge. Lack of consensus among the "experts" frequently frustrates researchers and teachers who are looking for language acquisition theories that will help them understand how to teach languages in the classroom. Like first language acquisition, the challenges of second language learning are mysteries that researchers will pursue for a very long time. Though consensus on a "full" language acquisition theory is likely, research that seems to have theory building as its objective has major long-term implications for language teaching and learning. Even if such consensus were obtained, there would be

concerns over how the theory should be used in actual language education. Many instructors follow the development of theory with curiosity, but they must nevertheless engage in classroom activities, organize lessons, and assess students' progress in the absence of a complete second language acquisition theory. Nowadays, learning a language is thought of as a process requiring more intellect than making binary decisions.

Significance of Study

This study is about language acquisition from an infant's early age as it will lift the curtain on the process of first language acquisition. The study will also focus on the language acquisition stages from birth to maturity and comprehension.

Objectives of The Study (Language acquisition, process, stages)

The study at hand is meant to determine

- To get familiarity with the steps of language acquisition
- To develop an understanding of the language acquisition process
- To highlight the stages of language acquisition easier; to make the language acquisition process apprehensible to the students of the language and linguistics

Methodology

This study is an exploratory type of research, sources of data collection for which are: books, journals, and articles published in the related fields of language learning and acquisition.

Language Acquisition Process And Its Development

Language acquisition is a continuous process due to which human beings acquire language. Language acquisition, in fact, refers to the acquisition of L1, which is basically a skill to learn the language of the native children up to the age of 3 years, while the SLA is concerned with the ability to learn the additional language along with the first language. It may be acquired in both periods: childhood and adulthood. Learning is different from acquisition as learning is taught by teachers, and the learner is provided with some sort of instructions, directions and guidance.

Chomsky argues that Universal Grammar is a particular instrument in the human brain that can aid language learning. It is the knowledge that basically exists in the brain of humans for which they do not need to make any effort. How does human language develop? Chomsky employs Universal Grammar to answer for the acquisition of a first language.

Language processing, production, understanding and comprehension are complex phenomena. All this process occurs with the help of several structures occurs in the "Broca Area" of the brain. Broca Area is present to the left on the front side exactly. The production and articulation of language are done by the vocal organs, including several muscles of the jaw, lips, tongue, palate, pharynx, larynx, trachea and lungs. While hearing organs like the ear canal, eardrum, small bones in the ear and cochlea are involved in hearing so that language is perceived by decoding.

After birth, a child starts crying first. He begins to hear different sounds and starts focusing on them, so his sense of hearing develops. When those sounds are repeated, they are memorized eventually. Then weeping becomes an expression of his feeling, and he adopts a weeping habit. Later, he starts producing responses to sounds. Then on voicing, and after that, he becomes successful in gazing and making eye contact. Meanwhile, the infant produces the open vowel sound "Cooing". The baby then starts giving an answer when talked to and mixes vowel sounds with consonants "Babbling",

enjoys conversation, and recognizes special voices. The baby then becomes able to produce two-syllable words, elaborate their own sounds, and shout for attraction. Takes an interest in talking with adults and takes much interest in rhythm and melodious voices. He recognizes some words which are repeated and utters the first complete word. The first words may be their own words, and then he combines gestures with words to communicate. Next, he tries to understand more and more and starts inner language. Then he is able to speak two-word sentences, which turn more complex. He further rushes towards new words and then starts grammar. Lastly, uses language for self-expression, enjoys jokes & naughty talk and finally becomes able to understand the native language as a whole.

Stages In Language Acquisition

After birth, a child is not familiar with the complete grammatical rules of the native language in his brain. The native language or mother language is acquired in some different stages, and every stage is passed up to the adult's language. These stages are described by Bolinger and Fromkin. There are six basic stages in children's first language acquisition, which take an essential part as follows:

Pre-Talking Stage / Cooing (0-6 months)

Pre-talking stage or Cooing is the very beginning period of a child's life after birth when it starts making sounds. These sounds are produced without constrictions and are uttered vowel-like sounds in response to human sounds very certainly and turn head or eyes in search of the speaker. Some giggling sounds can be noted occasionally (Bolinger 2002). For instance, a child (about the age of 4 months) shows the stage of cooing. The sounds he produces are vowels-

like. These are like back vowels [u] and [o] sounds like "oh", "uh", and "ah", specifically cooing. Yet the child faces difficulty in producing vowels like [i] and which sounds "hi", and is also unable to produce bilabial consonants [b], [p] and [m].

Babbling Stage (6-8 months)

The second stage regarding the acquisition of language is Babbling. It is the stage where infants produce sounds comprising vowels along with consonants (Steinberg, 2003). The infants are able to produce such sounds, but still, they are unable to produce all speech sounds. At this stage infants produce the sounds like (ma ma ma) or (da da da) and (ba ba ba) or (na na na).

Holophrastic Stage (9-18 months)

Fromkin (1983) describes the holophrastic stage of language acquisition as "holo", meaning "complete" or "undivided." According to him, it is a period when youngsters begin to speak a single whole word. For instance, a child pronounces his first word after 8 months of the appearance of his first uttered word during 9 months.

The Two Word Stage (18-24 months)

It is the 4th stage and is called the two-word stage, and wherein small sentences are produced with ordinary semantic relations. In this way, a child starts to generate definite sentences based on two words, with clear syntactic relationships between both the words and the tone of its utterance, lasting throughout the entire speech instead of just being split by a break between the two syllables. The "conversation" that follows demonstrates the types of patterns that may be observed in the toddler's utterances at this time (Fromkin, 1983). Essentially, a toddler at this stage is now able to articulate consonant

sounds that are consonants such as [p], [b], [d], [t], [j], [m], and [n].

Telegraphic Stage (24-30 months)

This is just a stage which can be described as we used to send the telegrams. The youngster does not intentionally give up non-content terms (Fromkin, 1983). At this stage, a kid produces sounds that are more than 2 words. It seems to be a 'sentence like,' structure with a sequential component, comparable to any syntactic structures which are seen in the grammatical language of adults.

Later Multiword Stage (30+months)

According to Bolinger (2002), it is a stage where a child adopts vocabulary very quickly on a daily basis. At this stage, there is no babbling; utterances have a communicative style. Children seem to be understanding and acquire each and every word, phrase and sentence whatever they hear or teach them.

Conclusion

After exhaustive discussion on the subject, it has been established that the acquisition of language is a process. Any and everybody acquires language stage by stage. At every step, there is some improvement, and this improvement leads the person closer to perfection in the art of speech. There have been two famous schools of thought represented by BF. Skinner and Noam Chomsky have been advocates of language acquisition through the aid of the environment and that of inborn capacity, respectively. However, the history of acquisition has proved that none of the both work perfectly in isolation. Language acquisition is rather associated with instinctive inclinations and the memorable material available to the person who is undergoing the acquisition process.

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