UNDERSTANDING THE FACTORS INFLUENCING SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

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Abstract: *THE PRESENT PAPER SEEKS TO GAIN AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE FACTORS INFLUENCING SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION. TO UNDERSTAND THESE FACTORS, THE ARTICLE WILL FIRST DEFINE WHAT IS MEANT BY A SECOND LANGUAGE, AND SECONDLY, EXPLORE THE PROCESS OF ITS ACQUISITION. IT WILL ULTIMATELY EXPLAIN THE CRITICAL ISSUES ASSOCIATED WITH ACQUIRING A SECOND LANGUAGE AND CATEGORIZE THE DISTINCT FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE ITS ACQUISITION. THE CLASSIFICATION WILL COMPRISE OF INTERNAL, EXTERNAL, AS WELL AS INDIVIDUAL, FACTORS. THE EXTERNAL FACTORS DISCUSSED WILL INCLUDE INPUT, INTERACTION, SOCIAL CLASS, SOCIAL FACTORS, AND SOCIAL SETTING. THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE SHARED FACTORS OF ETHNICITY, GENDER, SOCIAL CLASS AND SETTING, INPUT ROLES, AND INTERACTION WILL BE CONSIDERED. THE INTERNAL FACTORS EXPLAINED IN THE PAPER ARE FACTORS RELATED TO MENTAL AGILITY THAT CONSIDER THE EFFECT OF THE LEARNER'S EXISTING FIRST LANGUAGE. FINALLY, INDIVIDUAL FACTORS WILL INCLUDE THE PERSONALITY OF THE LEARNER, AGE, EXPERIENCE, AND COGNITION. ALL OF THESE FACTORS WILL BE ELUCIDATED.*
THE PAPER WILL REVIEW STUDIES CONDUCTED PREVIOUSLY BY AUTHORS SEEKING TO EXAMINE THE PERSPECTIVE OFFERED IN A BID TO GAIN AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE ACQUISITION OF A SECOND LANGUAGE. IT WILL SEEK TO IDENTIFY KEY CONCEPTS, AND TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE THEME OF SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION AND THE ROLE OF THE INFLUENCING FACTORS. THE PURPOSE OF THIS IS TO OFFER NEW CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE THEORIES AND REVIEWS ALREADY DONE, AS WELL AS HYPOTHESES, AS FAR AS UNDERSTANDING THE FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE THE ACQUISITION OF A SECOND LANGUAGE ARE CONCERNED.

Keywords: *INFLUENCE, FACTORS, SECOND LANGUAGE, ACQUISITION, LEARNING*

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1. INTRODUCTION

Acquiring a second language is never an easy activity and various viewpoints must be considered in order to gain a clear concept of the task. '*Acquiring*' a second language is no less than '*learning*' one, however, the usage of these terms differs, as well as the meaning, in regard to acquiring a second language (Flege, 2001, pp. 530-531). According to Larsen-Freeman (1976, pp. 125-127), the procedure through which an individual learns a second language is known as an '*acquisition*' rather than '*learning*' because the advancement of the first language in a learner is a distinctive process. Acquisition has also been defined as the internalization of formulas and rules used in communication in the second language. It is a more spontaneous procedure of internalized rules which results from the first language being utilized in the process of learning, supporting the advancement of knowledge in the second language. Therefore, acquisition is perceived as being the unconscious learning of a language naturally, and it does not rely on the teaching of language. Contrary to acquisition, *learning* is a planned study via formal instruction, for instance, classroom language learning.

For this motive, second language acquisition may be conceived as a section of inquiry that reviews the way people acquire a representation of the mind for a second language after the initial language has already been acquired (Khasinah, 2014, pp. 256-257). It is essential to make a clarification that some authors marked a particular difference between the terminologies L2 and Second Language Acquisition, noting Second Language Acquisition as the field of research, theories, and study which comprises of the discipline, whereas L2 acquisition is the study object (Díaz-Campos, 2004, pp. 250-255).

2. FACTORS INFLUENCING SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION (SLA)

As far as the acquisition of a second language is concerned, the non-traditional intention is that the learner learns a language that plays a social or institutional role in their society, for instance, a native Romanian speaker residing in the United Kingdom who learns English. Contrarily, acquiring a second language also means the learning of a particular language in scenarios where it does not fulfil any critical role in the community. In this case, the example would be a native Romanian speaker acquiring English as a second language whilst residing in Romania and essentially in the classroom only (Paliță, 2012, pp. 2-9). The difference between these two scenarios is mainly sociolinguistic rather than psycholinguistic. Hence, this view adds to our first attempt at defining second language acquisition in the sense that it can be both a conscious and unconscious learning process. Moreover, the second language can be learned in a tutored way, and in a natural way, both of which involve the expansion of grammar, lexis, pragmatic knowledge, and phonology (Flege, 2001, pp. 530-532).

2.1. EXTERNAL FACTORS

The practice of second language acquisition is influenced by external factors that emanate from the social disposition of the speaker (Adwani, 2017, pp. 158-164). These external factors include ethnicity, gender social class, input, social identity, and learner's experience of interactions made. It is self-apparent that mutually these issues are firmly associated with second language acquisition. These variables are crucial to consider regarding the process of second language acquisition. Language is made out of jargon words which are coordinated by sentence structure influenced by the first language (Hurtado, 2010). This infers that a second language learner may not utilize syntax effectually without being educated fittingly in jargon. This is because a great selection of words prompts excellent use of sentence structure, which elucidates the engendering of syntactically right, yet at the same time inelegant, expressions (Gardner, 1989, pp. 287-298).

The de-contextualized method of instructing jargon does not benefit the learner in understanding how to select words for their solid, informative purposes in various circumstances

(Larsen-Freeman, 1976). Second language learners routinely find it easier to deal with words than sentence structures whose ideas they need to decipher, aspect that makes it generally easier to teach words than sentence structure, particularly at lower-level classes (Khasinah, 2014). It appears that the advantages of learning jargon come increasingly quickly too, because particular words alone can make prosperous interchanges in certain conditions, which does not remain constant for sentence structure. To create advantages regarding vocabulary learning, instructors should plan their teaching of vocabulary with the intent of making words remain longer in the minds of the learners as well as advancing the use of words in various settings (Larsen-Freeman, 1976, pp. 125-134).

Furthermore, a fundamental concept to second language acquisition is input. Input is denoted by researchers as the language to which the speaker is exposed. The input may be non-collaborative, such as in text forms, heard, or read, or it may evolve from interactions such as conversations (Brown, 1991, pp. 7-8). The quality and the kind of input is predominantly important in the process of second language acquisition. The notion of ideal input, which can progressively influence the second language acquisition, was expounded by Krashen (2009) who observed that ideal input must be interesting, comprehensible, natural, relevant, and provided in sufficient quantity, but not grammatically structured.

Regarding input comprehensibility, psychological discoveries have also delivered confirmation that once the implication of an expression is understood, it may be kept in the extensive memory (Shoebottom, 2016). In the same way, it is easier to comprehend that language input considered fascinating by the learner may make an instrument of second language acquisition quicker. This fact is undoubtedly correlated to the idea of enthusiasm, since motivation as an element influences an individual's wish to perform a task (Ravem, 2008).

Learners who need to study are expected to attain more than individuals who do not. To be beneficial to the procedure of acquisition, the input must similarly be realistic and not grammatically structured. Realistic language is generated to accomplish some shared purpose in the community language where it was formed. Consequently, the input must be a model of actual language articulated by natural speakers in their daily interactions to lead to prosperous second language acquisition. The grammatically-ordered illustrations of language content that are frequently suggested to learners, particularly in settings of teaching in the classroom, are commonly not acclimatized to second language acquisition, and through these illustrations, individual grammatical arrangements are transferred (Ravem, 2008, pp. 175-186).

Moreover, the amount of input contributes to a significant function (Adwani, 2017). It is comprehensible that in a situation of second language acquisition, where the main articulated language by a group of people is not the language learned, a large dissimilarity in the outcomes of the course of acquisition is contributed to by the quantity of input the learner is exposed to. Input is associated with interaction which can be seen as the collective behaviour that happens when a single person speaks with another (Díaz-Campos, 2004). Interaction by this logic is relational.

To recapitulate, it is conceivable to assert that the function of interaction and input has a pronounced influence on second language acquisition, and the failure or the success thereof is intensely associated with interaction and input factors. Input has to have some particular features to influence second language acquisition, and spoken social interaction can enable the second language acquisition process.

Another significant factor in second language acquisition is the social setting, which traditionally means the context in which the language acquisition is undertaken. Many reviewers propose that second language acquisition differs per the social setting, and that the varied social settings may offer distinct prospects of learning a second language, subsequently leading to diverse outcomes (Brown, 1991, pp. 1-12). A significant difference needs to be made between natural and

educational social settings. In a natural setting, there is the contact of language learners with the second language native speaker or with other general speakers whereas, in the educational setting, the language is acquired by the learners in an institutional set-up such as a university, college, or school (Gardner, 1989, pp. 287-290).

It is usually assumed that acquisition that takes place in both of these settings is highly different. This is because the results of learning in a natural set-up are from express participation of the speaker, without the pronunciation of rules and principles. Acquisition in an educational set-up takes place through deliberate attention to the principles and rules. In this case, acquisition in natural set-ups leads to higher functional ability using the language compared to learners confined to second language acquisition in educational settings.

Social factors - for example, social identity, ethnicity, gender, and social class – influence second language acquisition, and are majorly related to the identity of the learner and hence, the factors associated with individual attributes. Regarding the issue of gender, it is generally agreed that women have a higher tendency to acquire a second language better compared to men, particularly in the prestige of linguistic forms and standards, mainly due to women's more positive attitudes regarding acquiring a second language. However, there is no basic consensus on this assumption: other reviews have supported that men are better acquirers of a second language, or that there is no distinction between gender and acquisition of a language.

Social class is another element that influences second language acquisition. Social class encompasses occupation, educational level, and level of income. According to these components of social class, people can be divided into four categories which are lower class, working-class, lower middle class, and the upper-middle-class (Díaz-Campos, 2004, pp. 249-251). Research and studies that have been carried out have revealed that second language acquisition and social class are established in the educational settings. The findings of this research conclude that those who hold a lower social class are less successful in second language acquisition compared to those of higher social status. The key reason for this phenomenon has been linked to the motivation of the learner.

Lastly, as far as social identity and ethnicity are concerned, several reviews revealed an apparent association between second language acquisition and cultural distance (Adwani, 2017, pp. 158-164). These reviews asserted that learners close to the culture of the second language are expected to perform better than those learners distant from the culture of the second language being acquired. Moreover, from a socio-psychological view of the association between the second language acquisition and ethnic identity, the learners' attitudes exhibited toward the second language will influence the acquisition process.

2.2. INTERNAL FACTORS

The learners' internal factors encompass the mechanisms within the learner that influence second language acquisition. These internal mechanisms are linked to the factors which direct second language acquisition, and it is essential to note that there are two key assumptions aimed at explaining these mechanisms. These key assumptions are the language-specific assumption and the domain-general assumption. Concerning the domain-general assumption, reviewers assert that language is equated to mental phenomenon and thus is acquired through basic mind mechanisms. Regarding the language-specific assumption, supporters of this assumption hold that people have particular cognitive mechanisms devoted to the learning of a language and that all people are born with Universal Grammar (UG). Shoebottom (2016) has stated that the UG encompasses functional categories (tense and complementizer) and lexical categories (noun, adjective, and verbs). Since these mental mechanisms generally deal with second language acquisition, with no difference between the acquisition of the first language and second language acquisition, it is claimed that UG therefore plays a significant role in

the second language acquisition process (Díaz-Campos, 2004). UG offers learners constraints or limits on what the possibilities of a language could be and contrarily, the learner has to comprehend which constraints and characteristics from UG will apply to a second language (Shoebottom, 2016).

Moreover, UG parameters influence the confines of cross-linguistic variation and, as far as the existing knowledge of the learner is concerned (from a linguistic point of view), it is evident that the initial language is considered the key source of first language knowledge. The second language acquisition process is therefore negatively influenced by the knowledge of the first language. This is due to learners transferring grammatical properties and strategic processing from the first language to the second language acquisition. However, the overarching assumption has been that the first language is the starting point for second language acquisition.

2.3. INDIVIDUAL FACTORS

Individual factors have been explained to influence second language acquisition. The individual factors that have been considered are the personality of the learner, age, experience, and cognition (Flege, 2001). The personality of the learner may affect the process of second language acquisition since learners who are more highly introverted have been revealed to take more time to acquire a second language because they are believed to be more hesitant and reluctant to make mistakes. According to Gardner (1989, pp. 287-305), these kinds of learners are increasingly likely to try newly acquired vocabulary.

Regarding the influence of a learner's age, there is a general agreement that particular concepts are influenced. It is more difficult for learners in their teen years than young children to achieve native level pronunciation. It is similarly argued that older learners find it increasingly difficult to acquire a second language. Concerning the experience of the learner, learners with more experience and knowledge are in a better position to advance to a second language than learners who lack the experience and knowledge (Ravem, 2008). For instance, a learner who has resided in two or more nations has been exposed to varied cultures and languages, and therefore has a basis for acquiring another language. This is more so than learners who have only interacted with a single culture. Learners' cognition influences second language acquisition in the sense that learners with high intelligence (greater cognitive abilities) learn a second language quicker. Consequently, it is believed that learners with innate language learning capability have a stronger ability to acquire a second language (Flege, 2001). A similar idea is expressed by Curelar (2013, pp. 34) who emphasizes the deep connection between learners' innate language learning aptitudes and easiness of internalising that language.

The existence of the above-mentioned individual factors makes every student's learning process unique in the sense that some learn "differently by seeing, hearing, reflecting, reasoning logically and intuitively so differentiated instruction helps to develop a better educational process and to cover, not all, but a great part of students' learning needs" (Păstae, 2019, p. 73).

3. CONCLUSION

It has been shown that second language acquisition is a difficult phenomenon to explain and that many scholars have made the observation that the acquisition process of a second language is distinct to each individual. In addition to this, second language acquisition is not a uniform and a predictable task, but the opposite: it is the outcome of several factors within the learner, as well as the learning setting and its relationship to the social characteristics of the learner. These factors are interrelated and influence each other. It is possible to differentiate between these factors (individual, internal, and external factors) and establish causal links, since external factors imply the language learner and the social setting influence second language acquisition. This is in contrast to internal

factors which refer to the factors associated with the existing knowledge of the learner, as well as the internal mechanisms which direct the procedure of second language acquisition such as motivation for learning and aptitude for the language. Finally, these factors have been understood to have either negative, positive, or both negative and positive influences on second language acquisition.

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