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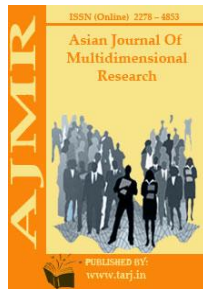
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VISION

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SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNING: ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

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ABSTRACT

This paper tries to investigate the current issues in second language acquisition in terms of various factors such as age, motivation, personality and so on. Furthermore, different approaches and methodologies will be explained. It also aims to set objectives for learning and teaching. Finally, particular paper provides implications on SLA by examining various researches.

KEYWORDS: *SLA, Approaches, Methodologies, Learning, Implications, Acquisition-Learning Hypothesis, Monitor Hypothesis, Input Hypothesis, Affective Filter Hypothesis, Natural Order Hypothesis.*

INTRODUCTION

Second Language Acquisition (SLA) is considered one of the most investigated and important field in linguistics. A lot of researches has been carried out to study the field. However, it still remains as mostly debated field. Even as Gass claimed (2008), it has advanced into an independent instruction with its own research intentions or motives, still has various issues and remains problematic. Taking into consideration that the field is new and the investigations, researches have been done for about only 40 to 50 years one can assume that the field can develop further and the gaps in the field can be studied thoroughly. Current paper mainly discusses the below mentioned factors:

1. Historical overview
2. SLA: Different Approaches
3. Various implications on second language acquisition

Historical Overview:

Second language acquisition (SLA) is a most referred field though it is relatively new comparing to other fields in applied linguistics. And there have many scholars, linguists who have significantly contributed to the field to name few they are Chomsky, Corder, Selinker, Nemser and others. In 1959 Chomsky introduced to the field his own form of linguistics which later was recognized by many scholars of the field for a long period and that popularity was even then referred to as Chomskyan era. It was a linguistic system where all the languages shared the same properties according to Chomsky. Furthermore, Chomsky claimed that the acquisition of child language was natural not depending on universal grammar or any kind of linguistic input (Selinker, 1972). Depending on Chomskyan notion one can assume that the second language acquisition is acquired in the same way as the first language. However, this claim is proved with only child acquisition of a second language when they are exposed to the language directly. After about a decade Krashen (1981) presented his famous 5 hypotheses to the theory of second language acquisition:

- The Acquisition-Learning hypothesis;
- The Monitor hypothesis;
- The Input hypothesis;
- The Affective Filter hypothesis;
- The Natural Order hypothesis.

If we look into the first hypothesis it divides the linguistic system into “acquired system” and “learned system” differently than Chomsky. According to Krashen language can be acquired not only in a natural way but also through conscious learning by linguistic input. Summarizing his other hypotheses, we can assume that there are other important factors in SLA such as age, motivation, self-esteem, anxiety and personality which play an important role in SLA. In fact, Krashen goes deeper into the field paying attention to each and every detail in the acquisition of a foreign language. For instance, in terms of personality and motivation he divides the learners as optimal users and under-users. Now they are referred as introvert and extravert learners respectively.

SLA: Different Approaches and methodologies:

According to Towell and Hawkins (1994), there have been different approaches implemented by researchers in SLA towards explaining such notion. These approaches mainly divided into three categories: linguistic approaches, sociolinguistic approaches, and psychological approaches.

Linguistic approaches: Study the learners’ ability in acquiring the foreign language depending on biological factors. And the grammar is naturally inherited by infants. The age factor is important for the same. According to the Natural Order hypothesis by Krashen grammatical structures have a natural order depending on the learners’ age wherein young learners can acquire more simple structures and adults can learn more complex ones as they have verbal abilities. Furthermore, there is a term called Critical Period Hypothesis where one side of the brain stops functioning due to neurological factors after puberty and a learner is not able to achieve a native like attainment of a foreign language. However, there are many contradicting studies about the CPH. And some more research studies, experiments have to be done on the same.

Sociolinguistic approaches: Mainly deal with two issues: first attitudes which learners have in learning the second language or “affective variables” as defined by Krashen (1981) such as motivation, self-esteem or anxiety. They can be positive and negative. And they are closely connected. In order to acquire the target language learner must have a high motivation and low anxiety. Second is the culture which is connected with the language. As Gass (1998) stated contemporary learner identity theories suggest ways to observe the individual language learner in a larger social world. Therefore, the diverse positions from which language learners are able to participate in social life and demonstrate how they can, but sometimes cannot adjust to the target language community. This is very important to overcome speech barriers.

Psychological or cognitive approaches: Study the relation between linguistics and psychology. As in achieving linguistic system psychology of a learner is essential. Because it deals with behavior and interactions of a learner. It also involves a set of habits where some grammatical structures become natural. For instance, some linguistic features are transferred from the first language into the second language which might affect both positively and negatively in the acquisition of second language.

Various implications on second language acquisition:

It can be implied that all the three approaches are essential in second language acquisition. If linguistic approaches deal with the linguistic factors such as grammar or “affective variables” in contrast the sociolinguistic approaches closely study the inevitable relationship between attitude and context towards language learning which vary from culture to culture. And it might impact negatively in comprehensible input. A good example can be of some poor societies not having an access to basic needs which are compulsory for comprehensible input. As Krashen (1981) himself argues that a child must be provided with all the necessary objects that help for the development of speech. Furthermore, teachers should take into close consideration of the learners’ background and personality also the age factors where to what extent learners are able to acquire the language rules depending on their ages. And also needs to closely monitor each and every learner’s progress. As in Krashen’s Input hypothesis teachers need not to teach speech as it is a natural competence. Because there is a natural order claiming that if once necessary knowledge is stored or learned then speech is automatically provided. First learner stores or learns the required knowledge and only then processes it.

CONCLUSION

The field of SLA is diverse and complex as it has been investigated throughout this paper. In order to fully understand this field, one must consider all the related issues that affect the process of acquiring the target language such as age, motivation, personality and of course mainly linguistic system which covers all the language aspects, as well as the sociolinguistic factors where the effect of society and culture in the acquisition of a foreign language is essential. As an outcome, it has been attempted to provide an account of those issues. Firstly, the paper emphasizes on the historical development of the field of second language acquisition showing the contributions of the scholars in linguistics. Secondly, the various approaches to SLA have been presented in detail. Finally, some implications from the various perspectives have been implied and explained.

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