



RESEARCH ARTICLE

Effects of Age and Culture on Second Language Acquisition

**Anila Mubarak¹, Abdul Bari Khan², Muhammad Afzal³, Hafiza Sana Mansoor⁴
and Rana Batool⁵**

Department of English, The University of Lahore, Sargodha Campus, Punjab, Pakistan

Email: ¹ ramal.rehan@yahoo.com, ² a.barikhan43@yahoo.com,

³ afzallak.aec@gmail.com, ⁴ Sanamansoor966@yahoo.com, ⁵ subhearooj@yahoo.com

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ABSTRACT

Language is a sophisticated tool to lay down human communication system. It is ever present in our thought, dreams, prayers, pondering, self-examination, communication and ceremony. Language is one-of-a-kind ownership of human being. It is God's special bequest to mankind. Without it human civilization would have remained impossibility. Language learning is a complex phenomenon. Learning English as second language or any other second language acquisition is always a face up to. Especially if one form a place where people hardly use that second language in their regular activities of life. Second language learners face several difficulties gaining good grasp over a foreign language. In this article we are highlighting two major problems of second language. Problems are "Culture" and "age" which cause hindrance in language for learners. English is not a very complex language.

Key words: Language, Culture, Age, Learner, Language Acquisition.

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INTRODUCTION

Language is a first and foremost human being and non-instinctive method of communicating idea, emotions by means of a system of your own accord symbols. Since linguistics is the study of language. It is imperative for a linguist to know what language is. In a nutshell, language is an "organized noise" used in actual social situations. That is why it is also defined as "contextualized systematic sounds." A language is a device that establishes sound-meaning correlation, pairing meaning with signals to enable people to exchange ideas through observable sequence of sounds. Jespersen's proposal; that human language originated while humans were actually enjoying themselves, is one of the more endearing speculation concerning the origins of language. It remains however, a speculation.

We simply do not know how language originated. When we uncover traces of human life on earth dating back half a million years, we never find any direct evidence relating to the speech of our distant associates. These are not dusty cassette tape fragments among the ancient bones, to tell us how language was back in early stages. Perhaps because of this absence of direct physical evidence, there has been no shortage of speculation about the origins of human speech. According to one view, God created Adam and "whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name there of" (Genesis 2:19) alternatively, following a Hindu tradition, language came from the goddess Sarasvati, wife of Brahma, initiator of universe. In most religions, there to be to be a divine source that provides humans with language. If human language did originate from a divine source, we have no way of reconstructing that original language, especially given the event in a city called Babel "because the lord did there confound the language of all the earth". (Genesis: 1:19)

A quite different view of the beginning of human speech is based on the concept of "natural sound". The suggestion is that primitive words could have been imitations of natural sounds which early men and women heard around them. Acquisition of second

language is rather difficult than L1, because conscious efforts are made to learn L2. During L2 acquisition learners face a number of problems out of which age factor and culture factor seems to be most important. The cultural impact of the learners makes a bit problem in understanding and adjusting in new culture and environment. Similarly age factor also plays a vital role in L2 acquisition because children have more competence and mental capability of learning L2 faster than adults.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Second language acquisition or second language learning is the process by which people learn a second language. That is, it is the process of learning an additional language by someone who has already learned native language or multiple native languages. Second language acquisition refers to what the learner does; it does not refer to what the teacher does. Second language acquisition can also refer to the scientific study of the second language learning process. Second language Acquisition theory deals with the range of variables. In particular, age of immersion, quantity of input etc. which may interactively determine the level of ultimate attainment. In this article we have focus on effect of age and culture on second language acquisition.

Some researchers have claimed that one of the important things to note about first and a second language is the age the person learned the language. It is believed that a second language is consciously learned and used after puberty while a first language is unconsciously acquired. In most cases, people never achieve the same level of fluency and comprehension in their second languages as in their first. Age is internal factor and culture is external factor. Culture differences create problems in learning second language. Critical period after which successful learning may be difficult to accomplish. Tucker notes that this period is usually tied to puberty because it has been noticed that people go through significant changes physically, emotionally and in terms of cognition during puberty. Humans use language as way of signaling identity with one cultural group and difference from others. Even among speakers of one language several way different ways of using the language exist, and each is used to signal affiliation with particular sub groups within large culture.

Three main changes noted in terms of language acquisition are:-

1. The Presence of Muscular Plasticity:

A child's plasticity is said to go away at about the age of five. Some psychologists note that it is difficult for a learner to fully master pronunciation of a second language. The question that readily comes to mind here is what then happens when young people and children above five years old travel outside their countries to other countries and within one or two years they have mastered the art of speaking the host language? This only shows that this claim may not be true for all cases and this is why motivation is important in language learning. There have been cases of children and young people from Nigeria who have settled in Europe or America after they were five and have mastered to an appreciable extent the host language.

2. Memorization Capabilities:

It has been noted that as a person grows older, their ability to retain large amount of information reaches its peak and then begins to decrease (Tucker (2003)).

3. Neurobiological Changes:

Tucker notes what she referred to as lateralization hypothesis. This is related to neurology. Medical science reports that as a person matures, the left hemisphere which controls the analytical and intellectual functions becomes more dominant than the right side which controls the emotional functions. This also affects language learning. Adults have the advantage of getting the essentials of grammar and structure than children

because of their cognitive development. The disadvantage of this ability is that adults tend to still hold on to the structures of their first language.

METHODOLOGY

For this article we extracted the participation of minimum of 3 classes of students drawn from different Urdu medium and English medium schools including Connoisseur Grammar school, Comprehensive Model school etc. Within each class, we intended to receive the participation of a minimum 8 students. Thus our total sample size consisted of 120 students. Those students were drawn from 3 ability levels, beginning, intermediate and advanced. Levels were based on the results of comprehensive English language test. We made two group, separating the students into levels ranging from 40 beginner to 80 advanced. The beginner group includes those students who were foreigners and had different culture than Pakistan's but were interested in learning English language as second language. The advance group contained those students who were elder in age and also less age students were include in this group. We have found by experiment that students belonging to different culture (says German) were having difficulty to understand English and Pakistani culture whereas the students belonging to age 7 to 15 were good in speaking English than the adult students. By observation and experiment we concluded the result by saying that culture impact plays vital role in 2nd language acquisition because students belonging to Pakistani culture were better in speaking English foreign students although their native language was Punjabi. The reason is that in Pakistani, English is used as a standard medium in most schools, colleges and universities. So the students of Pakistani somewhat familiar with English .Example in Connoisseur Grammar school, we observed that the student of O' Level were quiet glib in speaking English and even their style seemed quite remarkable. Whereas on the other hand in the same school some students who had come from other language countries like Germany, Italy had a hard time in adjusting in school and getting clench of English Language. Here again the reason observed was that these student said that there was no English spoken in their countries and that they were hearing it for the first time. These students said that there was no English spoken in their countries and that they were hearing it for the first time. The German girls were rather having a hard time in adjustment as they declared that they felt quite out of place. The students that were smaller in age had better grip on English language that was smaller in age had better grip on English language than adults. The reason is that Children have sharp mental ability to learn language then the adults. They have sharp pick and understand power. Women learn second language early than men.

ANALYSIS

In second language acquisition student most likely are suffering from culture shock. Anthropologist Kalvero Oberg first used the terms "Culture shock" in 1960 to describe the feelings that people have when they move to an unfamiliar culture. The immigrant students become remote and passive or they may behave more aggressively as the culture of students' changes, he become confused and new environment seems to him as a destructive agent. Students take time to get them adjusted in new culture and environment. But sometimes it happens that immigrant student donot get adjusted in new environment .But sometimes it happens that immigrant student do not get adjusted in new environment even after passage of many years. To this unsatisfactory culture, students find difficulty in learning the second language. The greater the difference between the new culture of students and the primary culture of students. The greater will be culture shock. New comer students have usually left behind family members, friends, teachers and their fellows. They are not surrounded by a familiar language and culture in new environment new place and culture. Such students are often not fully supported by their parents because the parents are experiencing culture shock too. In such situations

the L2 acquisition process gets affected badly and students show poor results or null results. Every child reacts differently to moving to a new place.

English language acquisition seems difficult to students due to such cultural changes. The students are in a state of shock and confusion due to their mental abilities is not working efficiently and sharply. The Learners go through different stages of culture shock before they become comfortable with their new language. New comers are excited about their new place, environment classteacher and student at initial stage. Everything seems wonderful to them and they have great time for learning about their environment. The differences between the new culture and the old culture become more apparent to new comers. They reject their new surroundings because there is so much that they unable to understand. In such circumstances the newcomers feel overwhelmed and sleepy, irritable, uninterested or depressed. In this situation the learners lose their interest in learning second language. Some students become aggressive and act out their frustration on other children. Learners are frustrated because they cannot communicate and are bombarded with unfamiliar surroundings, unreadable social signals and unrelenting barrage of new sounds. They are homesick and miss their family, friends and familiar rights and sounds. Such students spend their leisure time socializing with friends who speak the same language or in listening to much and watching videos from their home country. Teenage new comers often feel angry and helpless because they have had no say in their families move to Pakistan. They lose control over their environment because they don't speak English. The essay of new comers give us a further glimpse of how new comers feel when they first come to Pakistan. New comers to this stage of culture shock need time and patience from their teachers. Newcomers' starts to deal with the difference between old and new cultures .They learns to integrate their own beliefs to find ways to exist with both cultures. Along with culture problem in second language acquisition one more effect is that the parents do not want their children to lose their primary language and culture. Gradually new comers are able to enter and prosper in the mainstream culture. They accept both culture and mingle them into their lives. Students adopt the mainstream culture at school and follow the values of the home culture outside the school and follow the values of the home culture outside the school. Many immigrant parents make it clear to their children that they do not want them to abandon their primary language and culture and unless the new culture is practiced and L2 is not practiced, the students start facing problems in understanding L2. Their mind gets confused. Affective variables play a facilitative but non-causal role in L2. These variables include motive, self-confidence and anxiety – learner with high motivation, self – confidence, a good self-image and a low level of anxiety can combine to “raise” the effective filter and form a mental block that prevents comprehensible input from being used for acquisition. Second language acquisition includes strong home literacy practices, opportunities to use L2 informally as well as implemented specially designed l2 Education programs and sufficient time denoted to L2 literacy instructions, whereas L2 learners with little L2 exposures require explicit instruction to master grammar. There are many words in language which have different meaning in our language due to difference of culture whereas in other language it has a different meaning according to that relevant culture. For example the owl stands for most foolish and stupid person whereas in U. S.A it is used for sharp and intelligent. This falls in cultural variation and L2 learners find difficulty in learning the new language due to this culture variation.

Culture adopted in one language in not similar to culture adopted in second or other language because every new place and new environment has new culture. Talking about age factor, age has been regarded as an important factor in the ways in which language learners differ and vast number of researches have been conducted regarding age effects on second language. It is generally believed that children enjoy an advantage over adults in learning language because of their “plasticity”. According to Chomsky 1957, humans are equipped with a “language acquisition device” which enables them to acquire the language in a way that goes beyond simple habitual formation. The “Universal Grammar “

proposed by Chomsky later on 1966 is thought to be an innate system of language acquisition, the so called language acquisition device. The children learn language more quickly and easily than the adults because they are sharper and have a quicker to develop syntactic and morphological understanding than younger children. However, in the long-run Krashen found that learners who began their SLA as children achieved higher second language proficiency than those who started as adults.

Language learner who had acquires their L2 at an early age showed a “robust effect of L2 primes that were linked to an L2 target word”. There are many differences among second language learners. In first language acquisition by children, individual differences are largely overshadowed by striking similarities in terms of natural stages and ultimate attainment. However, in second language acquisition, individual differences have more of an impact on the second language learning process, and their role has thus considerable attention in recent years. Learners’ beliefs and affective factors are likely to have a direct effect on second language learning, but they themselves may be influenced by a number of general factors relating to learner’s ability and desire to learn and the way they choose to go about learning. The morpheme studies showed that the order of acquisition of a group of English morphemes was the same for children and adults. Learners who start as children achieve a more native like accent than those who start as adolescents or adults.

CONCLUSION

Problems of L2 learners are great in number but the culture and age problem play a vital role and cause hindrance in learning a language. English is not very complex language. But there are many confusing things in English. English learners deal with technical problems. If one overcomes these problems, then it will become easier to learn English. In learning English the teachers play an active role to make the students understand him in better way and a student facing culture problems can overcome his difficulties if he is given extra attention by the teacher. Similarly age problem is not a controlled problem but it can also be overcome if the instructor makes the thing quite clear to the learner.

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