

Brief Survey on Theories of Second Language Acquisition

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වර්තමානයේ දී ලොව පුරා වෙසෙන බොහෝ පිරිස් ඉංග්‍රීසි, ප්‍රංශ, ජපන්, ජර්මන් වැනි දෙවන භාෂාවන් ඉගෙන ගැනීමට විශේෂ උනන්දුවක් දක්වන බව අපි දකිමු. මෙම නැඹුරුව ශ්‍රී ලංකාව තුළ ද සීඝ්‍රයෙන් ව්‍යාප්ත වෙමින් පවතී. මේ පිරිස විවිධ භාෂා දෙවන භාෂාවක් වශයෙන් අධ්‍යයනය කිරීමේ දී ගැටළු රාශියකට මුහුණපාන ආකාරයක් පෙනෙන්නට තිබේ. ඒ සම්බන්ධයෙන් ප්‍රකට වාග්විද්‍යාඥයින් කිහිපදෙනෙක් න්‍යායන් ඉදිරිපත් කොට ඇත. නෝම් චෝමස්කි, ක්‍රාෂන්, ලිඩියා, වයිට් සෙලින්කර් හා ගාඩනර් යන වාග් විද්‍යාඥයන් භාෂා උපාර්ජනය පිළිබඳ න්‍යායන් ඉදිරිපත් කළ පිරිස අතර වෙති. මෙම අධ්‍යයනයේ අරමුණ වන්නේ එම විද්වතුන් දක්වා ඇති තම න්‍යායයන් පිළිබඳව කෙටි විශ්ලේෂණයක් කිරීමයි. ඒ තුළින් දෙවන භාෂාවක් ඉගෙන ගන්නා විද්‍යාර්ථීන්ට මෙන්ම එම විෂය උගන්වන ගුරු හවතුන්ට ද උත්ත න්‍යායන් පිළිබඳ මනා අවබෝධයක් ලබා ගත හැකි බව අපගේ පිළිගැනීම ය.

Introduction

At present, many people all over the world seem to have a great tendency to learn second languages. For instance, the global trend is to learn English, French, Japanese and German as second languages whereas in Sri Lanka, English, Sinhala and Tamil languages are learnt as second languages for various purposes. Predominantly, in Sri Lanka, English is

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learnt as a second language as it brings more benefits to those, who use the language. All three major communities in Sri Lanka, Sinhala, Tamil and Muslim are more enthusiastic in learning English while Sinhala people learn Tamil as a second language and Tamil and Muslim people learn Sinhala as a second language. Hence, it is now absolutely understood the significance of learning second languages in Sri Lanka, and throughout the world.

Through the present study, it is hoped to analyze the theories of second language acquisition and other theories related to it. L2 is generally acquired or learnt according to the situation of the learner. Sometimes, learner acquires it unconsciously or learns it consciously in a formal classroom with the guidance of a teacher.

Inter language, which is closely related to L2 usually, comes between L1 and L2 or the target language. This affects all linguistic aspects such as phonological, morphological, syntactic, semantic and pragmatic levels. It is a common feature found in all target languages. Inter language later develops into a second language. Communicative competence* is more effective than linguistic competence in using a language. Later, it was developed by Dell Hymens (1966) in response to the abstract nature of linguistic competence. Chomsky says that competence is the ideal language system that makes it possible for speakers to produce and understand an infinite number of sentences in their language and to distinguish grammatical sentences from ungrammatical sentences. However, L2 learners should gradually overcome their linguistic errors so that they will be able to be competent in all language skills such as listening, speaking, reading and writing. This is a very essential fact that should not be ignored at all. Otherwise, L2 learners become much poorer and weaker in their communication skills.

Stephen Krashen (1988) emphasizes through his theory, (krashen,1988) Theory of Second Language Acquisition that that language acquisition hardly requires extensive and deeper use of conscious grammatical rules and does not require tedious and frequent drilling and practice. He further says that acquisition requires only the meaningful and effective interaction in the target language or natural communication, in which speakers are scarcely concerned with the form of their utterances, but with the messages they are conveying and understanding. In other words, they want to speak or write so that the listeners or the readers can

understand their messages. But, today in many adult classes, teachers make much effort to impart grammar knowledge to their students, which is really boring and uninteresting. As indicated above, Krashen never encourages the students to learn grammar with tedious and frequent drilling and practice. His point of view is that they should learn grammar unconsciously without making much effort.

Second Language and Inter language

A language learnt by a person some years after his or her native language, especially as a resident of an area or employee in an office, where it is in general use or a language, which is widely used or spoken, especially in commercial field, government and education, in a particular region, is known as a second language. (Random house kernerman Webster's collage Dictionary, 2005)

For the second language learner, the acquisition of meaning is arguably the most important task (slabakova, 2010:231-17). It is believed that the meaning is the heart of a language, not the exotic sounds or elegant sentence structure. There are several types of meanings: lexical, grammatical, semantic, and pragmatic. All these different meanings contribute to the entire process of L2 acquisition.

The type of language used by both second and foreign language learners, who are learning a target language is known as an inter language (IL). It is also defined as the study of the ways, in which nonnative speakers acquire, comprehend and use linguistic patterns in a second language. This is also known as studies in transitional stages of second-language ability.

IL theory is generally credited to Larry Slinkier (1972), who is an American Professor of Applied Linguistics.(selinker,1972:209-231) It reflects the learner's evolving system of rules and results from a variety of processes, including the influence of the first language which is known as transfer, contrastive interference from the target language and the overgeneralization of newly encountered rules.(crystal:1997)

It is now apparent that there is a closely related bond between L2 and IL. Hence, it is absolutely necessary to investigate the relationship between these two phenomena, which is common to all L2 learners all over the globe. This will be discussed comprehensively under inter language.

Krashen's theory of second language acquisition

Stephen Krashen is employed as a professor emeritus at the University of Southern California. He is a well known linguist, educational researcher, and activist. He is credited with introducing various influential concepts and he introduced the acquisition-learning hypothesis, the input hypothesis, the monitor hypothesis, the affective filter, and the natural order hypothesis. In addition to that most recently, Krashen (1987), promoted the use of free voluntary reading during second-language acquisition, which he says is the most powerful tool we have in language education, first and second.(krashen,2013) His theory consists of the following aspects.

1. Acquisition-Learning Hypothesis
2. Monitor Hypothesis
3. Natural Order Hypothesis
4. Input Hypothesis
5. Affective Filter Hypothesis

1. Acquisition-Learning Hypothesis

Krashen refers to both acquisition and learning through his linguistic theory and shows the distinction between those two phenomena. L2 learners use these two methods, acquisition and learning for learning L2. Of them, acquisition is the product of a subconscious process. The children undergo the subconscious process when acquiring their first language whereas learned system or learning is the product of formal instruction. It comprises a conscious process. According to Krashen, acquisition is more effective than learning and he encourages L2 learners to acquire the language and not to learn it. At present, it is language learning, which is more practiced and drilled in adult learners' classrooms. As Krashen suggests, it is more effective if the teachers encourage adult learners to acquire the language rather than learning it. That is what Krashen exerts him to emphasize. For this purpose, the teachers are required to train the adult learners to acquire the language skills; listening, speaking, reading and writing. The learners need frequent practice and drilling till the sentence patterns are internalized in their minds.

2. Monitor hypothesis

Monitor hypothesis shows the relationship between acquisition and learning. It defines the influence of learning on acquisition. According to Krashen, the learning system performs the role of the monitor or the editor. The monitor is usually involved in planning, editing and correcting function. Krashen admits that the role of the monitor is used only to correct deviations from normal speech and to give speech a more polished appearance.

3. Natural Order Hypothesis

Natural order hypothesis means the acquisition of grammatical structures in a natural order. For a given language, some grammatical structures are acquired early while others late. This order seems to be independent of the learners' age, L1 background, and conditions of exposure. In fact, Krashen does not accept grammatical sequencing when the goal is language acquisition. His argument is that grammatical structures should follow a natural order. Otherwise, it becomes artificial and beyond practice. When grammar is acquired in natural way, the adult learners usually do not forget it. They automatically get used the relevant grammatical structures.

4. Input Hypothesis

Input hypothesis is Krashen's attempt to explain how the learner acquires a second language. Hence, the input hypothesis is related only to acquisition and not to learning. According to this hypothesis, the learner improves and progresses along the natural order when he/she receives second language input.

5. Affective Filter Hypothesis

Through affective filter hypothesis, Krashen illustrates that motivation; self-confidence and anxiety play a prominent role in language acquisition. These factors become more significant in the process of language acquisition. He also emphasizes that that students, who are highly motivated, have a strong sense of self and enter a learning situation with a low level of anxiety. Such students are much more likely to be successful

language acquirers. Students, who have a low level of motivation, low self-esteem and high level of anxiety, will encounter many barriers and difficulties when they acquire the language and will not be able to progress as naturally or as quickly as their peers, who are not disturbed by these factors. Krashen thus suggests that learners should be motivated to acquire the language along with self confidence. He further points out that they should not have high level of anxiety either, which disturbs their acquisition process. Many adult learners are confronted with this barrier. They are sometimes psychologically demoralized when acquiring L2 thinking that they will fail to do so since they are not young now. And the other crucial issue is their high level of anxiety to acquire the language. Teachers should realize their psychological problem and remedy it having discussions with them regarding the matter.

In his hypotheses, Krashen obviously highlights the difference between language learning and language acquisition, explaining that language learning is a conscious process focused on the grammatical rules of a language while acquisition is more of a subconscious process that allows production of a language over time with less focus on grammatical rules. Krashen also refers to the fact that the affective filter hypothesis is most effective when the teachers deal with students, who are acquiring language rather than memorizing rules. At present, in many adult classes, it can easily be observed that the teachers do their best to teach adult learners more grammar rules, which they really find boring and lethargic.

In order to lower student's affective filters, teachers can provide a variety of activities and modes of instruction that will motivate students and reduce their anxiety levels. Some of the ways that teachers can lower the affective filter are as follows according to Krashen.

Both oral and written instructions should be provided to lower their anxiety level. If it remains in high level, they find it difficult to acquire the language. The teachers should involve the adult learners in interesting and impressive activities. For instance, discussing world events related to political, cultural, social and religious aspects and new technology can be favorable ways to attract students. Providing materials related to the students' real lives is also an effective method. For example, if the students are part of a specialized program such as an auto mechanic program or a cooking program, teachers can provide information that is related to these topics to keep students engaged. Allowing for jokes and relaxed

conversation at certain times makes the lessons more interesting and impressive. Teachers should also refrain from orally correcting students. Oral correction is generally not very effective and it has the negative side-effect of creating a classroom climate, where students are reluctant to share ideas and answers out of a fear of being wrong. This will most probably discourage them. Allowing students to submit answers anonymously is another effective technique as some students do not get exposed to the class thinking that the other students may laugh at them. They can write them on cards or use whiteboard markers or chalk to put answers on the board. When this strategy is used, incorrect answers can be corrected without embarrassing the student, who committed the error. This allows each student to see that he/she is normal each person in the class is growing and developing and still makes mistakes, just like they do. This strategy also helps give students a feeling of success because they can also be praised for the originality and content of their submissions. Reinforcing the idea that language acquisition and development takes time and that students are not expected to be perfect in the beginning stages.

The process of learning a second language is characteristically non-linear and fragmentary, marked by a mixed landscape of rapid progression in certain areas, but slow movement, incubation or even permanent stagnation in others. Such a process results in a linguistic system known as inter language (Selinker: 1972). Inter language is a halfway house between L1 and TL. L1 is the source language that provides the initial building materials to be gradually blended with materials taken from the TL, resulting in new forms that are neither in the L1, nor in the TL.

Free Voluntary Reading

Free voluntary reading during L2 acquisition is another linguistic technique suggested by Krashen (Krashen, 2004) through one of his significant researches, which is related to using extensive reading in language education. Students are free to choose any book, magazine, newspaper or journal that they are interested in and are allowed to read it at their own pace. The aim of a free voluntary reading program is to help students enjoy reading. Through free voluntary reading, the adult learners automatically acquire grammatical patterns, syntactic and spelling patterns and expand their limited vocabulary. It is, therefore, an absolute need to promote the reading habits of the adult learners during L2 acquisition. At present, it is found that majority of the adult learners are reluctant to improve their

reading habit. They are in need of improving their speaking skill or oral competency. It is through receptive skills, reading and listening skill, they are able to reinforce their productive skills, speaking and writing. Today, majority of adult learners are found to be much weaker in their productive skills. Hence, Krashen's point of view regarding L2 acquisition is immensely significant.

Motivation in Second Language Acquisition

Krashen has referred to motivation in L2 acquisition in his affective filter hypothesis. Gardner's socio-educational model and the significance of motivation is a contributing factor in L2 acquisition. ** Motivation is divided into two basic types. They are integrative and instrumental motivation. Integrative motivation means the learner's positive attitudes towards the target language group and the desire to integrate into the target language community.

It is believed that the students, who are most successful when learning a target language are those, who like the people that speak the language, admire the culture and have a desire to become familiar with or even integrate into the society in which the language is used. This form of motivation is known as integrative motivation. When a person becomes a resident in a new particular community that uses the target language in its social interactions, integrative motivation is a key component in assisting the learner to develop some level of proficiency in the language. Instrumental motivation means gaining some social and economic prestige through L2 achievement. This is generally characterized by the desire to obtain something practical or concrete from the study of a second language. With instrumental motivation the purpose of language acquisition is more utilitarian, such as meeting the requirements for school or university graduation, applying for a job, requesting higher pay based on language ability, reading technical material, translation work or achieving higher social status. Instrumental motivation is often characteristic of second language acquisition, where little or no social integration of the learner into a community using the target language takes place, or in some instances is even desired.

Critical Period Hypothesis

Some researchers have pointed out that distinction between the first language (L1) and the second language (L2) is the age factor. L1 is unconsciously acquired without any effort unlike L2, which some people learn consciously. In most instances, people never achieve the same level of fluency and comprehension in their second languages as in their first language. These views are closely associated with the critical period hypothesis, which was first proposed by Montreal neurologist, Wilder Penfield and it was popularized by Eric Lundeberg in 1967 with *Biological Foundations of Language*. (Lundeberg, 1967) This specific period ranges from year 01 to year 12 of a child. During this period, any child can acquire any language he or she is exposed to without making any effort, in other words they learn it unconsciously. Some people learn a second language during this critical period, and some try to learn it after this specific period. L2 acquisition or L2 learning takes place after a first language is already established. Children have an easier time learning a second language, but anyone can do it at any age. It takes a lot of practice and time only.

Universal Grammar and L2 Acquisition

Lydia White is both a researcher and educator in the field of second language acquisition (SLA). In 1989, she was involved in a very significant survey regarding Universal Grammar (UG) and Second Language Acquisition and later it became a standard textbook in many university level SLA courses. Through her book, she has made effort to explore the implications that the theory of Universal Grammar has had upon second language acquisition approaches as well. According to Lydia White, UG is not confined to L1; it applies to L2 as well.

Lydia White, who is internationally recognized as a great linguist in the field of generative second language acquisition has conducted some researches regarding her concept. Her research is accepted to have created a new framework for second language research guided by universal principles, which underlie the acquisition of a native language by children apply also to the attainment of a non-native language or L2 by adult learners. At the same time, she has shown that mother tongue influence crucially determines many properties of the inter language grammar. It is inter language that gradually develops into L2. In addition, her research has

provided a variety of methodological tools for investigating how the native language affects the learning of a second language as well as the effects of universal principles.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it is apparent that prominent linguists such as Krashen, Gardner, Lambert, Hymens, Lenneberg, Selinker and Lydia White have introduced their respective theories regarding L2 acquisition, which undergoes many stages before it is well established in the minds of the learners. All these theories were briefly discussed above and found some important facts, which will help both teachers and L2 learners for acquiring L2. Out of those linguistic theories, Krashen's theory, 'language acquisition is more effective than language learning', plays a prominent place in L2. Lenneberg points out that as far as L2 is concerned, critical period hypothesis related to the process of L1 acquisition is far more instrumental in L2 acquisition. Inter language introduced by Larry Selinker lies between L1 and L2 and finally it develops into L2 with more development. Lydia White's argument is that UG is not only related to L1 acquisition, but also it is related to L2 acquisition. It is now obvious that all these theories directly or indirectly enable the L2 learners to acquire L2 without any difficulties.

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***Communicative competence is a term in linguistics, which refers to a language user's grammatical knowledge of syntax, morphology, phonology and the like, as well as social knowledge about how and when to use utterances appropriately.**

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