

First & Second Language Acquisition

TEFL Methodology

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A Comparison between First & Second Language Acquisition

- ◆ SIMILARITIES

- ◆ Misconceptions about L1 & L2 acquisition (Ervin-Tripp, 1974):

1. The foundation for L2 is built largely from a transfer of the rules of L1.
2. Only L2 is constructed from prior conceptual knowledge within the learner.

Responses to the misconceptions

- ♦ Newmark (1983)
 - Students who have intend to perform without sufficient language skills and knowledge will revert to L1 syntactic rules.
 - At this level they will use not only L1 structures with L2 words, but L1 words as well.
 - The dependence on L1 decreases when eventually gaining proficiency in the L2.

Responses to the misconceptions

- ♦ In regard to the 2 misconception, researchers agree that L1, like L2, is constructed from prior conceptual knowledge.
- ♦ Further research has proven that :
 - L1 and L2 learning is similar in natural situations
 - L2 learners use many strategies (overgeneralizations, production simplification, lost of sentence medial items, etc.) similar to those used for learning L1.

Further similarities

- ♦ Further evidences say that both L1 and L2 appear to develop in predictable ways (Krashen, 1982; Larsen-Freeman, 1978; Cazden, 1972; Ellis, 1986). The evidences support the conclusion that speech addressed to children in their L1 (motherese) and speech addressed to foreigners (foreigner talk) is evidence that the process of L1 and L2 acquisition to be similar in many ways.
- ♦ Shorter sentences, high-frequency vocabulary, “here and now” items, indirect correction, frequent gesture, and lack of overt attention to form, are, among others, the many similarities observed in real communication (Henzl, 1973; Freed, 1978; Hatch, Sapia, & Gough, 1978; Arthur, Weiner, Culver, Young, & Thomas, 1980; Long, 1981; Weshe and Ready, 1985; Richard-Amato, 1984).

- ◆ Both require a silent period, sequence and in a particular mode (Asher, 1972; Postovsky, 1977; Gary, 1975).

Differences

- L2 learners are usually older when acquiring a second language.
- L2 and L1 learners differ in affective factors, cognitive functioning abilities and preferences, and certain kinds of knowledge.

A Comparison between First & Second Language Learners

Characteristics	L1 Learner	L2 Learner
Construct language from prior conceptual knowledge	√	√
Is an active learner who tests & revise hypotheses	√	√
Requires an interactional process	√	√
Uses cognitive strategies (oversimplification, etc.)	√	√
Is aided by modified input	√	√
Develops language in predictable stages	√	√
Makes developmental errors	√	√
Requires a silent period	√	√
Benefits from a silent period		√
Is usually cognitively more highly developed		√
Generally has a greater knowledge of the world		√

Characteristics	L1 Learner	L2 Learner
In most cases, can learn and apply rules more readily		√
Usually has more control over the input		√
Has an L1 as a resource		√
May have other second languages from which to draw		√
Is familiar with one or more other cultures		√
May have a problem with attitude and/or motivation		√
Is more likely to be inhibited, anxious, and/or afraid of making errors		√

The Process of Learning a Second Language

- ◆ Contrastive analysis
- ◆ Error analysis
- ◆ Interlanguage development
- ◆ Fossilization
- ◆ Defining and reaching a goal

Contrastive Analysis

- It is based on behaviorism. It considers L1 to be mainly an interference to the mastery of L2. Thus, L2 proficiency is achieved by breaking down the habits of L1.
- Relevant method: audiolingualisms
- The weakness of contrastive analysis: it is not a good predictor of errors in L2.

Error Analysis

- ♦ It is based on developmentalism (learning develops in variable stages as learners interact with the environment).
- ♦ Error analysis looks at such errors positively and considers them necessary to the development of language.
- ♦ Interestingly error analysis takes into account how L1 contributes to the development of L2, considering features that are not found in either language called *interlanguage*.

Interlanguage Development

- ♦ It refers to the variable progression through which each language learner constructs a system of abstract linguistic rules (Ellis, 1997).
- ♦ The process of systematic development of syntax, semantics, and pragmatics of L2 is similar to the process followed by L1 learners.
- ♦ The progression toward proficient L2 use is not linear.

Fossilization

- ◆ Fossilization occurs when pidginized forms become obligatory in the students' production.
- ◆ It only occurs in L2 learners, not in L1 learners.
- ◆ Factors influencing fossilization:
 - Increased anxiety about the learning situation
 - Overemphasis on being 'native-like'
 - Lack of competent linguistic models
 - Not enough flexibility within the learner
 - Insufficient motivation

Defining & Reaching a Goal

- ♦ Native-like proficiency should not be the goal for all L2 learners.
- ♦ The goal must be realistic and appropriate depending on the L2 learner needs to communicate.
- ♦ What can be done to achieve this realistic goal is to increase contact with competent speakers of language. Such contact include:

- Setting up peer-teacher situations

- Inviting fluent speakers of the target language to the classroom

- Organizing pen-pal relationships with peers who are more advanced in the language

- Arranging field trips and planning celebrations with more advanced speakers of the language

- ♦ These efforts can support learners' motivation to prevent fossilization and encourage them to move forward in the language development process.

Language Acquisition in the Classroom

- ◆ Two assumptions are then promoted:
 1. L1 and L2 acquisition processes share similarities.
 2. Classroom can be an appropriate environment for language acquisition

Two models are proposed to support the 2nd assumption: the Monitor Model (Krashen, 1982) & the Variable Competence Model (Ellis, 1986)

The Monitor Model

- ♦ The model relies on two different linguistic systems: acquisition (subconscious) and learning (conscious).
- ♦ Emphasizing on providing comprehensible input.
- ♦ Criticisms to the Monitor Model:
 - Learning and acquisition may indeed be part of the same component.
 - The notions of controlled and automatic information processing (McLaughlin, Rossman, & McLeod, 1984).
 - These two processes fall somewhere on a continuum between conscious and subconscious functioning (learning style must be considered, comprehensible input might influence the success of implicit learning).

The Variable Competence Model

- ◆ Focusing on interaction; having appropriate input is not enough, but providing the opportunity to negotiate meaning is the key factor.
- ◆ The variation in the production of interlanguage forms is often the result of using automatic rules in unplanned discourse or analyzed rules in planned discourse.
- ◆ Both systems (automatic and analyzed systems) represent a continuum rather than a dichotomy. The rate of acquisition depends upon the quantity and quality of the interaction in which the learners are involved.

Levelt's Model

- ◆ This model provides the blueprint for the first language speaker that may have important implications for second language comprehension and production and has already been applied in the areas of vocabulary development and bilingual production.

Questions to Discuss

- ♦ Some people argue that a discussion of the acquisition process is not relevant to the classroom because it is difficult, if not impossible, to make it happen there. What is your stand on this issue? Base your answer on your own experience as a language student.
- ♦ Why do you think fossilization is unique to second language learners? Do you have any ideas about how a teacher might help second language learners overcome fossilization and move forward again in the language development process?