Understanding the Process of Second Language Acquisition

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ABSTRACT

As the world is becoming more and more connected, the education system needs to provide each learner with an equal opportunity for success. Measures should put in place to ensure that obtaining an education is made possible for all students, including foreign students, such as English speakers in China and Chinese speakers in the United Kingdom. The biggest obstacle to making this dream a reality is that very few educators are sufficiently equipped to understand the foundational knowledge with regards to teaching learners of speaking a different language from the regional language, raising the need for target language acquisition. This paper will look into the Acculturation model of second language acquisition and Stephen Krashen's theory of second language acquisition. Since educators are increasingly being forced to teach students speaking foreign languages understanding second language acquisition is very important. Understanding the process of second language acquisition may be important to educators and enable students in second language acquisition.

1. Acculturation Model

Social-psychological factors such as proximity to target language, the desire to assimilate, attitude, time spent in the target language, and congruence of the two cultures are used to predict the levels of acquiring a second language in the acculturation model [3]. The acculturation model was developed by John Schumann in 1973 after studying six migrant language learners for a period of 10 months. In his study Schumann focused on their language acquisition level and employed the use of questionnaires in data collection. Schumann noted that one male did not show significant increase in his language acquisition for the 10-month period, and he credited this to the individual's failure to engage in conversations occurring among native English speakers. Schumann argues that the acculturation model is the beginning process of a second language acquisition which is nonlinear.

To determine the validity of the acculturation model, Schmidt conducted a research on Japanese artists Wes, who relocated to Hawaii at 33 years of age. In his study, Schmidt followed Wes for 3 years without formal instructions examining the English language acquisition. It was discovered that due to the proximity to the social and psychological components of English, Wes acquired communication competence but failed in mastering English linguistics [7]. This validates the acculturation model as shows that Wes mastered the English language in areas he was engulfed in while staying in a foreign country. Wes failed to master linguistics due to the social and psychological factors failing to relate to the literacy of the Eng-

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lish language.

The degree of a learner's success in learning a foreign language greatly depends on contact the learner has with the speakers of the second language, keeping the company of the second language culture gives the learner a better chance to learn the second language. A study conducted by Schuman showed that identification with the community of the acquired language as a basic requirement for second language acquisition. Schuman continues by saying that the individual learning can be placed along a continuum that ranges from proximity to the second language speakers to social psychological distance. Two main variables main variables that cause difference in the way a second language are social factors and psychological factors. The degree of social distance is accounted for by social variables while the individual's response to the second language learning conditions is accounted for by psychological variables [5].

According to the acculturation model, a learner's position or perceived position to the language that is to be acquired is the social distance. Shuman also considers social distance as a primary factor to gauge acculturation and the effectiveness of a learner in picking up a second language. In the acculturation model, social and psychological factors on the same scales by Schuman, making the assumption an individual's success in learning depends on his or her acculturation; the level of the reduction of the social and psychological distance. Other studies have also confirmed the positive relationship between the depth of social distance between two cultures and the learning difficulty of the second language. The language acquisition degree based on the acculturation model correlates with the learner's proximity to the target group. This correlates with the socio-educational model that says, the psych to acquire a new language comes second to the "want" to be accepted as a part of that community.

There are a number of factors that guide social distance determining how close a person will be to the speakers of the second language. Such as

(1) Subordination: that can be linked to a particular status of the community as compared to a different group.

(2) Pattern of integration: The possibility of learner giving up his or her own culture to pick up that of a different group. The degree to which an individual holds on to their culture.

(3) Enclosure degree of both groups: Do the two cultural communities share their social amenities such as stadiums or have separate social amenities?

(4) Cohesiveness degree of target culture learning group: Intra group contacts are termed cohesive, inter group contacts are termed non-cohesive

(5) Second language learning group's size.

(6) Congruence degree of the second language learning group: the second language group's culture can be similar to the target group or completely unrelated to the target group.

(7) Inter-group attitudinal evaluation: attitude of one group towards the other.

Psychological distance is determined by how the measure of the learners comfort in relation to the social factors surrounding the learning of the second language. Having too much psychological distance deters learning by building resistance in taking full advantage of the situation.

There exist five factors that may increase the psychological distance which are

(1) Language shock: New linguistic system learning disorientation;

(2) Culture shock: The fear, anxiety, and stress of entering a new culture;

(3) Culture stress: Culture shock such as home sickness;

(4) Motivation;

(5) Ego permeability: The willingness or lack of willingness to give up ones differences and favor the target language group.

Types of Acculturation

There are two types of acculturation distinguished by the Schumann's model. In Type 1, social contacts with the second language speakers are developed by the learner through social integration. The second language speakers provide the leaner with input while the learner maintains the lifestyle and values of his or her native culture. In Type 2 social contacts in target culture are developed by the learner. The learner also moves towards adopting the target group's values and lifestyle. By encompassing type 1 and type 2 acculturation definitions, it implies that one can succeed in acquiring the target language whether the norms of the target culture are adopted or not.

There are four stages in the process of acculturation;

(1) Euphoria: At this stage, the newness of the surrounding excites the learner.

(2) Culture-shock: The cultural differences feel as an intrusion to their image of self-security.

(3) Progressive recovery and Cultural stress: some challenges brought by acculturation are solved. The learner begins to accept the difference in thinking.

(4) Full-recovery: Assimilation of the second language culture. The leaner develops a new identity and adopts the new culture.

Acculturation and Motivation

The foundation for the acculturation model was laid

down by Gardener on his work on integrative and instrumental motivation. The need to interact opens up opportunities for interaction and reduces the social distance separating the individual learning and the culture of the acquired language. Individuals with a more instrumental motivation more often find the educational setting enough to achieve their goals of learning the second language. Such people may have little motivation to interact with individuals of the second language cultural group but still acquire the second language. On the other hand, integrative motivation pushes learners by inspiring extensive motivation to form bonds with individuals of different cultures when the chance arises. Creating cultural bonds enables such individuals to learn the linguistic and cultural knowledge required to have sociocultural competence.

Limitations of the Acculturation Model

As a major criticism opposing the significance of cultural factors in the acquisition of a second language, scholars argue that most of the time cultural factors are not very prominent and people may do well in second language acquisition in different social conditions. Other studies have also shown that some individuals are motivated and work to succeed in second language acquisition irrespective of the unfavorable social conditions and there are those that fail to succeed with favorable social conditions. This shows that personal differences of learners such as styles of learning and affective state are more prominent factors that attribute to the second language acquisition as compared to the social conditions a leaner is presented with. Therefore, generalizations on the importance of cultural factors should be avoided.

The acculturation model has also faced criticism for not using other significant variables, like instructional and cognitive factors in second language acquisition. According to the acculturation model, all other variable not related to acculturation are considered of less importance to second language acquisition. For a case, no explanation is provided on the internal process responsible for second language acquisition. The acculturation model does not provide an explanation for the developmental sequences and acquisition orders and their causes [7]. This model was also faulted for arguing that instruction lacks major importance in second language acquisition.

The acculturation model was also criticized for overlooking the fact that social factors directly impact the acquisition of a second language while scholars believe they have a direct impact. Pidginization is also a collectivist phenomenon, while the acquisition of language is an individual phenomenon. The acculturation model does not explain how the quality of contact experienced by learners is influenced by social factors. This has led some scholars to be cautious in placing social factors in as a separate entity in the forefront.

There are also some unanswered questions with regards to the model. Schuman personally claims that the acculturation model only provides answers for acquisition of the second language when the individuals involved are immigrants. He also tells the reader to be cautious about variables other than acculturation that may influence second language acquisition. Schuman believes that variable typology development is of great importance and should be encouraged. How long the continuation and necessity of such typologies is not clear.

Research has also argued that acculturation should be clearly classified with means of measuring the level acculturation needed for the success of second language acquisition for it to be considered an aspect of second language acquisition [5]. The acculturation model has been found problematic in that the acculturation concept and what it entails is complex to be tested and defined operationally. The model does not also provide a means of measuring the social distance it claims can affect second language acquisition. The model is not also useful for accounting for individual differences as it deals with cultural groups and not individual learners.

2. Krashen's Theory

Stephen Krashen's theory of second language acquisition.

Stephen Krashen is an expert from University of California and has specialization in linguistics especially in the theory of language acquisitions. Most of his research revolved around study of other languages apart from the acquisition of English.

Several books have been published by Krashen since 1980. Krashen's theory has been widely accepted and is being used in various or has impacted widely in many aspects of the acquisition of second language, research and teaching.

Stephen Krashen's theory has impacted second language acquisition since he researched and studied it for several years. His theory is formed on the basis of Five different hypotheses which are; acquisition or the hypothesis of learning, monitoring hypothesis, hypothesis of natural order, hypothesis of input, and the affective filter hypothesis [1]. Krashen's theory has faced criticism, Gitsaki [4] and Menezes [6] pointed out that his theory is not clearly defined and it is not verifiable through research. Even after critics Krashen's theory has had a massive impact and its significant in the record language acquisition field and it allows time in understanding the model wholly.

Hypothesis Krashen used in his model.

The acquisition learning hypothesis

The acquisition learning hypothesis is a part of Stephen's model [1]. In this hypothesis Krashen illustrates that learning requires individual's consciousness and effort to learn language or focus on the structure and he also illustrates that acquisition happens when subconscious activity is issued to enhance internalization of the language in an individual mind, this hence forth makes it natural for an individual to use. This acquisition learning hypothesis is popular among many linguistics and teachers of language. It meant that we have two forms of acquisition of any foreign language which include the "acquired" and the "learned" system. Acquired part requires a lot of interaction which is meaningful with the language that is targeted and natural communication in which people speaking concentrate not only by utterances but the communicative act. Learning part is done by formal instructions. It involves consciousness of an individual and its product is conscious knowledge. For instance, grammar rules knowledge.

The deductive approach is a fundamental form of learning in a teacher centered situation, while a student-centered situation employs the inductive approach to ensure language acquisition. Krashen also adds that acquisition has greater importance compared learning.

The Monitor Hypothesis

Krashen clarifies the impact and relationship, that learning and acquisition has on each other. The monitor withholds the information until when the learner is ready to use the learnt language [2]. The person holding learned information is used properly when there is adequate and sufficient time for an individual to think about what has been learned. The ultimate goal is to use the language form correctly and the learner already knows the rules that apply when trying to use in the production. According to Abukhattala [1] there is probability for a leaner to underuse, overuse, or use the monitor correctly depending with their acquisition confidence. The importance of conscious learning is limited in second language learning. The monitors role is to correct a speech and give it a perfect appearance. Nce is often associated with overusing the monitor.

The Input hypothesis

Krashen in this model illustrates how a second language is acquired by an individual. This paper, focuses on acquisition and not learning. Krashen illustrates that the progress of learners in line with natural order, after he or she acquires the input of the target language, that is a progress in addition to the current state of competence in linguistics. Since all leaners cannot march in their state of linguistic confidence at a go, Krashen illustrates a natural communicative input is important in making a syllabus ensuring that every individual receives at least 'I + 1' input that is required for his or her current level competence in linguistics. This is the most influential and important hypothesis by Krashen. Abukhattalan [1] illustrates that the speaking and writing skills progress and mature when the giving of comprehensive input is continuous. Krashen insists that the silent stage is important to make an individual learner competent and confident to use the learned language even if it will not sound competent to others.

The affective fitter hypothesis

Krashen in this theory explains that a learner or individual has to be open and have the will to receive information in a language that he or she targets to learn in order to reach the language acquisition device and henceforth getting the information that he requires he requires completely. This is influenced by the mood which revolves around; motivation, self-confidence, self-image, and anxiety. These are factors that could possibly lower or raise the affective futter. The higher the affective futter goes the more the input would not be understood would not be understood due to a "mental block" that is put in an individual's mind [2]. The affective variable plays the role of facilitation in the acquisition of the target language, learners who believe in themselves, good self-image, and high motivation are more affiliated to success. Low motivation, introversion, and anxiety prevents comprehensible input from being used in second language acquisition. In addition, Krashen illustrates role of positive affect in language acquisition.

Natural Order Hypothesis

It is less important and it's associated with research findings. Scholars suggest that getting or acquiring of a language grammatical structure follows a natural order which can be predicted. Grammatical structure acquiring time tend to differ for different languages. Some could be gotten in a short time span while take very long to learn. This natural order does not depend on the age of the leaner or the individuals background of first language exposure. Krashen illustrates that the natural order hypothesis implication is not that a language program syllabus could be made on the basis of the order found in the study and research. Krashen rejects grammatical sequencing when

the ultimate objective is language acquisition.

Krashen insists that errors are made while using language are due to not fully acquiring the language skill, but learning some skills that may help when an individual tries to use the skills of production. Planning of a teaching order is not necessary as one will get more of language by using it in situations and not based on the exact teaching structure.

The Role of Grammar in Krashen's View

Krashen illustrates the importance of study of language structure and impact and general educational advantages. Most high schools and colleges may want to include in their language programs. Benefits largely depend with the learner's ability to understand a language. It should be noted that language analysis, making rules, setting irregularities apart ad teaching lots of complex facts is not language teaching but language appreciation.

The only time grammar teaching could lead to language acquisition is when the learners have a particular interest in the target language and it is used communication and instruction giving. This occurs when there is concern with students and teachers that studying formal grammar is vital. The teacher should have enough skills and meet the language requirements. For comprehensible output and with adequate learner participation that makes the classroom a good environment for second language acquisition [2].

After the filter is low concerning language explanation; the students' conscious efforts are usually on the subject matter, what they are talking about and not the medium. In this case, the teacher and student are lying to themselves. They tent to believe that their progress is depended on the subject matter but its due to the study of grammar. The progress is due to the medium and necessarily the message. But in the case the subject matter they are interested it would do just as well.

3. Krashen Hypothesis and Application to Teaching

In acquisition planning hypothesis

The optimal method language skills are acquired is by natural communication. A second language teacher is supposed to create a state in which a language is used in order to fulfill its objective purpose and goal. This method helps learners acquire a language as opposed to just learning it.

According to Mentor Hypothesis

As a second language teacher, it is always difficult to create a balance between encouraging accuracy on leaners and fluency in them [1]. These balances will depend on various factors which include the language level of your individual learners' context of the language use and individual goal of every student. This balance could be called communicative balances.

According to Natural Order Hypothesis

Teachers are supposed to have awareness that some aspects of language are easier to apply and acquire than others. This should be taught in a certain order conducive for the learner's acquisition. Teachers should first introduce the language concepts that are easier for learners to acquire. Then they should apply scaffolding to introduce the concepts that are difficult.

According to the Input Hypothesis

Input hypothesis highlights the importance of using the second language in a classroom setting. The ultimate objective of any language program is to help individual learners to communicate. It is the duty of the teacher to create a suitable environment for the acquisition of language by providing as much input as possible.

According to the Affective Filter Hypothesis

Creating a safe environment that is accommodative to students is vital for acquiring language. This is very important in language acquisition since in order to take input and produce language individuals have to be comfortable with making mistakes and risk taking.

According to Reading Hypothesis

It is very important to include reading in the language and the way it should be used in real life situations so as to effectively acquire the second language.

4. Limitations of Stephen Krashen's Theory of Second Language Acquisition

First Krashen's theory of second language acquisition has been scrutinized and widely criticized as it happens with any other conspicuous theories. Critics of the theory began as soon as the theory was developed with Mclaughlin being its greatest critic. Saying that it has not been defined well and that his claim on this research cannot be proved. McLaughlin also has several critics on comprehensible input and input hypothesis.

The effective filter hypothesis is termed as vague and that it has no ability to predict any linguistic development. McLaughlin insists that the monitor does not function

as Krashen illustrates and that the natural order is not as comprehensive as Krashen puts it because of method logical considerations. McLaughlin insists that nothing works in Krashen's theories as he claims. Krashen's theory arises a lot of hostility which is so unusual. Other scholars termed Krashen's claims as feeble, sloppy, profound misunderstanding and illegitimate.

According to Krashen's theory, Language acquisition does not require too much use of complex grammatical rules and does not require tiresome efforts. Second language acquisition requires a very meaningful interaction in the target language natural communication where the people speaking the language have no concern for their utterances but with the information they are passing and internalizing. Comprehensive input is very vital and is needed for language acquisition. The best techniques hence forth are those that produce comprehensible input and contain the information that students really want to hear. These methods and techniques do not force early progress and early production but progress comes from supply of communication and comprehensible input.

In the actual setting or real world, communicating with willing sympathetic native speakers helps a leaner understand more hence very helpful.

5. Conclusions

Foreign students speaking foreign languages are becoming more and more common in our learning institutions. Educators have the responsibility to provide such students with high-quality education as deserved by all students. Reviewing second language acquisition theories is beneficial to trainers and learners as it provides teacher practices and learning practices for second language acquisition. From the Acculturation and Krashen's theory, second language acquisition is a social and cognitive learning experience that requires peer to peer experience.

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