

## Language Learning and Acquisition: Successes and Obstacles

Ibtehaj Mohammed Akhorsheda

Part time instructor at Hashemite University

### Abstract

The purpose of this study is to shed light on the process of language learning and acquisition as to understand the basic strength and weakness points of the learner's capabilities of acquiring a new language. It is indeed important to consider the main elements and principles that feature and constitute the very core issue of language acquisition including the obstacles and the factors associated with this persistent process. It is essential to point out here that the elements and principles of learning a language are somehow subjective in the sense that they differ from one learner to another, especially when we consider the functional and contextual part of the language on different levels. Therefore, learning the functional and practical part of the language can facilitate and simplify the process of understanding the meaningful context implied in each situational context such as the use simple daily conversations, dialogues, and even body language.

**Keywords:** *Acquisition, language, obstacles, weakness, strength, learner.*

### 1. Introduction

The learner's success in acquiring a second language usually encounter many problems and obstacles, but it is also a process that is filled with motivating factors and aspirations. However, learning a second language can be hard and time-consuming as well. In fact, the frustrating conditions which can hinder the learner's attempts to gain a good mastery of the second language are multifarious and ramified. First, I would like to explain the points that contribute to one's success in acquiring the second language. In fact, one of the most important factors that contributes to one's success in acquiring a second language is the psychological readiness and the intrinsic and internal motivation which provides a positive sense that enables the learner to prove his/her abilities and potentials of learning. In other words, the intrinsic motivation provides the learners with a good momentum and enthusiasm to keep learning and not to surrender to the feelings of disappointment and frustration the learner may face during the various phases of learning a new language. It is important to note that learning a new language is highly demanding as it imposes several steps to take on the learner's part. The learner must

dedicate the sufficient amount of time for practicing the new language in a semi-like situation. Such situations should resemble real-life practices of a natural exposure to the cultural environment of the target culture. As Enamul Haque states that, “Language learning refers to the formal learning of a language in the classroom. On the other hand, language acquisition means acquiring the language with little or no formal training or learning. If you go to a foreign land where people speak a different language Second Language Acquisition: Dr. Md. Enamul Hoque 2 from your native language, you need to acquire that foreign language. It can be done with little formal learning of the language through your every day interaction with the native peoples in the market place, work place, parks or anywhere else. This is true for learning spoken language.” (2)

Practices are several and cannot be exclusively related to one or two activities. In the age of technology and globalization, cultural exposure has recently become an open scale and an easy access to all learners, especially with the aid of learning programs that are available in one’s own culture. Instead of traveling to other cultures, it is important to note that cultural exchange practices are now considered good alternatives and substitutes to the real ethnographic and real communication in terms of the similarities between the virtual leaning environment and the actual engagement in one’s culture. As Kukulska-Hulme, “ Language learning has moved to the forefront of developments in mobile learning, accelerated by the availability of an abundance of free and inexpensive mobile apps (applications) in dedicated online stores operated by Apple, BlackBerry, Google, Nokia, and others. It has also been bolstered by significant worldwide demand from developing economies where learning a language is seen as a means to improved employment and trade.( 2)

## **2. Motivation and New Standards: Learning a New Language**

Some new learning practices give a simultaneous and immediate exposure to the target language culture easily and interactively. In other words, with the modern techniques and learning procedures, the learner could utilize the opportunities of leaning another language more easily and effectively as to have a more efficient and successful learning experience in all means. Therefore, such learning programs can provide learners with the best learning chances they could get while at home and thus save much time and efforts.

Therefore; in order to have batter learning, one should be motivated within. This gives them more determination, insistence and endurance to overcome many problems that hinder the attempts of learning. Moreover, there are other factors which can help the learner acquire the second language which is the availability of educational institutions and the competence of language teachers. studying at different schools and having many courses in English Language might not be enough to acquire a full literacy of the second Language because of some hindering factors. The learner can face many difficulties in acquiring the second language. One of the most influential factors that hinder the process of acquisition of the second language is the dilemma of

social life. We know that a learner can have some complicated social problems. For example, when one lives in a male dominated society, the female learner for example, would not be given an appropriate and adequate chance of the freedom of speech which one needs in various social occasions. Traditionally and stereotypically, in some patriarchal societies some women are not allowed to participate in the social life equally as their men peers do. The pretext is that women don't seem nice if they talk a lot outside home.

Moreover, another problem that may arise and hinders the learners from social and linguistic communication is the lack of knowledge about one's own culture and the other as well, the new culture. This actually might come from the clash cultural and social norms which usually differ from one's own cultural mindset in general. Being blind to the new culture of the second language will definitely cause a lot of obstacles that hinder the process of learning. It is worth mentioning that language cannot be separated from the cultural context in which the language exists. Language can be separated from the social and practical life of the target language culture. Some differences in cultural and social aspects stand as barriers against one's success in acquiring the second language.

### **3. Second Language Acquisition: Similarities and Differences**

There are many similarities and many differences between first and second language acquisition. First, the manner and the way of acquisition are very different from each other. The nature of acquisition is also different. For example; we see that one can acquire his first language naturally and without artificiality. Meaning that, one can acquire his first language without learning and teaching. So, first language acquisition be an outcome for the socialization and the accumulation of experience that one can get as time goes on. Whereas, second language acquisition can be so artificial and intentional. Meaning that, one must exert efforts and work hard to acquire the second language. Therefore, second language acquisition can be so much similar to the first language acquisition if one learns it in a natural way. In other words, the second language can be easily acquired when it can be learned in a similar environment to the first language acquisition.

Moreover, acquiring a second language does not entail that you get a full proficiency. Whatever one can learn still needs more experience. Rather we see that first language learner can have a good mastery of the language because he /she is a product of this language. So, second language acquisition can face many difficulties because it necessitates doing many things in order to acquire the second language. Therefore, practice is one of the most important requirements for the second language learner to be qualified or able to speak the second language. As Zoltan Kovecs notes, "Members of a culture interact with each other for particular purposes. To achieve their goals, they produce particular discourses. Such discourses are assemblies of meanings that relate to particular subject matters. When such discourses provide a

conceptual framework within which significant subject matters are discussed in a culture and when they function as latent norms of conduct” ( 341)

It is supposed that learning a second language should be accompanied by learning the culture itself. Because language can't be separated from its cultural and social context. So, it is similar to the first language as it also should be in line with the cultural background of the language.

#### **4. Language and Culture: The Learner's Characteristics**

Knowing the culture of the target language can be very useful for the learner because it will facilitate the process of learning as it enables him to learn the second language in context. Moreover, knowing culture paves the way for communication with people and removes any misunderstandings. Mahadi, Tengku, Jafari, Spideh point out that, “Although the word culture is now widely employed in the social sciences, and especially by anthropologists, in the sense that has just been identified, it can be defined, technically, in several different ways. Culture may be described as socially acquired knowledge, to be precise, as the knowledge that someone has by virtue of his being a member of a particular society.” (233)

Learners have different characteristics which distinguish every one of them. For example, intelligence stands to be a prominent factor which creates difference. For example, some learners have innate high intelligence. Some learners have multiple intelligences, a thing which makes learning a very easy process for them. More importantly, learning may have different areas in which they can prove their own creativity and intelligence.

Aptitude also means the preparedness and the readability for learning. Some learners have high levels of aptitude which enable them to learn perfectly well.

Learning styles can be also judged in accordance with the student's levels of education and intelligence. Therefore, can be looked at from a specific angle which is intelligence. Every student has his own ways of learning and these learning styles can interfere with the success of learning. Every learner approaches it from a certain angle in which he/she can deal with learning differently.

The personality also plays a very significant role in learning. In fact, it is the main or the major point which creates difference between individuals in learning. Some students may have problems in their personalities. Some of them get anxious or worry all the time. and the other may have great difficulties in dealing with other. Therefore, learning a second language can create some psychological barriers for the students. they might have negative feelings of fear and anxiety which of course result in negative outcomes when learning a language. Michael Clouston points out that, “Motivation is a key concern both for teachers and students. Yet while teachers

hope to motivate our students and enhance their learning, professionally we must be very clear not to manipulate them in the process, recognising that ultimately learning is the student's responsibility<sup>4</sup>. If our teaching is appropriate and learner-centred, we will not manipulate our students as we encourage them to develop and use their own LLS. Instead we will take learners' motivations and learning styles into account as we teach in order for them to improve their L2/FL skills and LLS.” (9)

Motivation can be also looked as an essential part of the personality. Motivation can be looked as a momentum which help the students learn a second language. Motivation also represents the eagerness to use the language and to know the community of the second language as an extension for learning a language.

Zoltan Kovecses points out that, “Culture and language are connected in many ways and the interconnections can be studied from a variety of different perspectives” (344 Cultural differences can also have direct influence on motivation. Learners of the second language always tend to create social relations with the other language community. Therefore, language tends to be a tie which makes learners harmonize with one another. We should not forget the fact that language exists in a social context. It cannot be isolated from people and the community at large. Therefore, we should not forget that language has some sociolinguistic and psychological roots which cannot be divorced from it. It's a fact that the teacher must take into his consideration the differences among learners. These different learners need different tasks in order to meet their demands as learners. Moreover, the teacher must also create a suitable environment for all learners. This environment needs to be so comfortable and fruitful for everyone. Thus, we will have excellent learners and we will come up with fruitful outcomes.

## 5. Conclusion

Language and culture have an overlapping and intertwined relationship, so we also take this fact into our consideration. Language can't stand on its feet without language. Language is a magnificent product of culture and culture is an integral part of the culture bearing on mind the greatness and comprehensiveness of the culture. Since there is an irreplaceable and inseparable relationship between language and culture, it's very important to realize the extent that the culture has when we want to learn a language. Therefore, culture plays a very significant role in the written and spoken discourse because it has great influence on language itself.

Learning a new language can be so much effective and influential as it is associated with the cultural aspects and social dimensions. So, communication with people can be an excellent exercise for a practical purpose. It is a practice in which we can exchange experience and share cultural ideas. It is a practice in which people can culturally reveal their ideas and know more about the language itself. So, culture constitutes the basic foundations for the language, so it

keeps enriching the learner's awareness of the language that he wants to learn. Therefore, language plays a significant role in the written and spoken discourse as it provides the speaker with ideas, concepts, meanings, context and knowledge.

## References

Clouston, Michael. (1997). *Language Learning Strategies: An Overview for L2 Teachers*. Essays in Languages and Literatures, 8, at Kwansai Gakuin University.

Hoque, Enamul. (2017). *An introduction to Second Language acquisition*. Education and Development Research Council, Dhaka Bangladesh.

Kovecses, Zoltan. (2010). *Language and Culture*. *Studia Slavica, Hung*, 55(2):339-345

Kukulska-Hulme, Agnes (2012). *Language learning defined by time and place: A framework for next generation designs*. In: D'iaz-Vera, Javier E. ed. *Left to My Own Devices: Learner Autonomy and Mobile Assisted Language Learning*. Innovation and Leadership in English Language Teaching, 6. Bingley, UK: Emerald Group Publishing Limited , pp. 1–13.

Mahadi, Tengku, Jafari, Spideh. (2012). *Language and Culture*. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, Vol 2(17).