

Aptitude and Age and their Influences on Child's Second Language Acquisition (SLA)

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Abstract: Second Language learners are affected in their second language acquisition process by many factors. Two of those many factors are aptitude and age. It is a common belief that starting young to learn an L2 makes a significant difference in language learning. The competence of a language learner is said to be directly related to his age, motivation, and attitude towards learning. In many types of research and studies on second language acquisition, many researchers argue that the early the child is exposed to a second language after completing the first language acquisition, the better chance to learn the language, but that will not always be true. If given sufficient exposure to the target language and motivated to understand it, SLA learners might outperform those who started learning L2 in their early years. This draft proposal will seek to answer if there is no linguistic advantage between L2 learners who began early or late if the quantity and quality of the exposure to the target language are significant and if the learner's aptitude is crucial in SLA.

Keywords: Second Language Acquisition, L2, Second Language Learning, Age, Aptitude.

I. INTRODUCTION

Second Language Acquisition (SLA) refers to the study of how students learn a second language (L2) in addition to their first language (L1). The second language is fixed as learning and adopting a language that is not your native speech. In one case, if you accept a foreign address, you have mastered that language. For second language learners to make maximum progress with their learning styles, they must recognize their differences.

Several theories hold that personality factors significantly influence the level of success that individuals achieve in reading an L2. It is based on the premise that some characteristics of the learner's personality might encourage or inhibit second language learning by enhancing certain aspects of language learning while impeding others (Larsen-Freeman & Long, 1991).

Within a limited time, kids can infer what they hear, speak and perceive with accuracy. After the almost effortless acquisition of the essential elements of communication, mostly from simple conversations with parents and peers, the child's knowledge of lexemes and the composition of the language are broadened and fused by formal schooling. Unlike taking the first or native language, the process of reading a second or third language seems much more sluggish and frequently plays with remarkable success.

The figure of elements has been claimed to determine the second language phonological acquisition. Nevertheless, the relative impact of several features involving learning a second language phonological system demands deeper analysis. This study considers two significant factors that have been claimed to affect second language, a phonological acquisition that includes age and aptitude. This study also seeks to assess these factors' relative impact on learning and teaching contexts and teaching a second language (L2).

Statement of the Problem

The study will be conducted to determine the perception of Agriculture High School's students, teachers, and parents towards the influence of aptitude and age on a child's second language acquisition. This research aimed to answer the following questions:

1. Does age matter in SLA?
2. What are the language aptitudes of the students?
3. Why do some ESL students learn much more quickly than others?
4. What is the relative impact of these factors on (4.1) learning and (4.2) teaching contexts and teaching L2?

Significance of the Study

This study will try to answer whether the students' aptitude for their studies and the age level of the learners influence a child's second language acquisition. It will also answer the relative impact of aptitude and age in learning and teaching. Also, with this, it would test the stability of the students in learning a new language. Unquestionably, this study would be a helping tool for students and teachers.

Scope and Limitation

This study is limited to the selected high school students, teachers, and parents of Agriculture High School for the S.Y 2021-2022. The researcher will consider the 100 respondents through random sampling.

Definitions of Terms

Language Aptitude- refers to the potential that a student has for learning languages.

L2- Second Language

SLA- Second Language Acquisition

ESL- English as Second Language

II. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE AND STUDIES

This chapter surveys literature pertinent to this study. It includes language aptitude and the relation of age to SLA.

Factors accounting for individual differences in acquisition have been studied extensively for the monolingual child first language learners and adult second language learners (Dörnyei & Skehan, 2003; Hoff, 2006). However, they have been studied much less in child second language (L2) learners. Understanding how child-internal and child-external factors determine the rate of L2 acquisition by children has both applied and theoretical relevance. Awareness of individual difference factors could be helpful for educators interpreting evaluations of academic achievement and speech-language assessments based on the L2 or for advising parents regarding language use at home and language of instruction at school (Paradis, Genesee & Crago, 2011). In addition, the relative weight of internal versus external factors in predicting acquisition rates is pertinent to constructivist or emergentist approaches to language acquisition.

Factors influencing language acquisition rates that change among individuals can be categorized as internal or external to the language learner. Child-internal components include language aptitude, transfer of morphosyntactic features/constructions from L1 to L2, and cognitive maturity as represented by chronological age. Prior research shows that these factors could potentially influence children's L2 acquisition rates.

Language Aptitude

Aptitude is measurable and differs in degree between learners in any population. Higher aptitude for second or foreign-language learning predicts more successful adaptation to instruction or naturalistic exposure to the second language (L2). It is measured by demonstrably faster progress in education and higher levels of ultimate attainment in proficiency after a course of educational activity or observing a period of naturalistic exposure to the L2.

Language aptitude is considered a kind of intelligence inherent to the person, and cadences of language aptitude are related, but not identical to, general intelligence as assessed in the form of IQ (Dörnyei & Skehan, 2003). Language aptitude consists

of various factors, including verbal memory skills and analytic reasoning or pattern recognition skills, and it is the most consistent predictor of success in adult L2 acquisition, next to motivation (Dörnyei & Skehan, 2003). That point appears to be evidence that some scholarly people have natural abilities in L2 learning and others do not. Then it would be interesting to know if the students with exceptional qualities (aptitude) also receive the highest proficiency level; if not, we must detect the causal agency of their low achievement. The few surveys that have tested memory and analytic elements of language aptitude in L2 children show that these internal learning mechanisms are also predictive of L2 outcomes in this population. Previous research centered on older kids and adolescents and children acquiring an L2 as an alien language or through immersion schooling. It would be instructive to know if similar effects are found in younger children who are minority L1/majority L2 learners.

According to Carrol (1991), aptitude consists of four sub-factors, i.e., first, phonetic coding ability (the mental ability for sound discrimination and to code foreign sounds in such a way that they can subsequently remember them. It varies between individuals, but this variation does not correlate with language learning success. Second, associative memory (ability to make links or connections, between stimuli and responses, for a model, native language words, and foreign language equivalents, to develop the violence of such bonds. Nowadays, associative memory is not so important. The capacity to memorize more editorially complex material and the mental power to impose organization and structure of the material is more potent predictors of long learning success. Third, grammatical sensitivity (the ability to consider the contribution that words form into sentences. emphasizes recognition of social function rather than explicit representation). Lastly, inductive language analytic ability (ability to analyze a corpus of a language material and to notice and identify forms of correspondence and relationships. Ability to identify shapes, especially in verbal material, whether this involves implicit or explicit rule representation)

Furthermore, according to Skehan (1998), it has three sub-components, i.e., auditory ability, linguistic ability, and retention power. Phonemic coding ability is necessary at the beginning stages of language learning: converting the acoustic input into what might be termed processable input. Failure in this region may mean no input to share with. The more phonemic coding abilities succeed with the acoustic stimulus that the scholar is presented with, the richer the corpus of material that will be usable for subsequent analysis. Language analytic ability central stage of data processing: the capacity to deduce speech communication rules and make linguistic generalizations or extrapolations. Here is where authorities develop, and restructuring occurs. Memory is concerned with the acquirement of new information, retrieval, and the way the elements are stored, probably redundantly. This component correlates strongly with language learning success.

Is age really a considerable factor in SLA?

The question of when is the best age for Second language acquisition seems to be associated with the amount of input or exposure to the target language. Learners are still fighting to understand sufficiently what effect age has on the language learner when the exposure to the target language is not enough. Munoz (2010) argues that the quantity and the quality of the language input are highly significant for young learners at the early levels of second language learning. She delivers results that compare more youthful and older language learners and declares that young learners consistently show better language results than those who start SLA later in life as adults. Talking about this further, this strong evidence backs up the claim that children gain much more by participating in the ethnic environment. It is where children are naturally exposed to the language input rather than set forth at an early age in a classroom environment, which shows that children are exposed to a more natural input of the target language (Munoz, 2010, p. 40-41). This indicates that exposure is more important than the age factor regarding SLA.

Age is one of the most important affective factors in Second Language Acquisition (SLA). At that spot is near consensus among SLA researchers that age is an affecting factor that takes close to different performance stages in second language learning. Most experts also hold that individual learners learn differently depending on learning opportunities, the motivation to learn, individual differences, and determining trends in second language learning. Nevertheless, there is little consensus on how far individuals of the same age group of learners follow a similar and linear shape of language attainment. However, the question of how developmental stages interact with individual learning differences has been a question of great debate.

Young learners grow and, at different stages, build up a set of cognitive, emotional, physical, and societal characteristics that are indispensable to orient the L2 instruction and understanding of their learning.

The notion that young scholars are better at learning languages than adults is supported by the critical period hypothesis (Penfield and Roberts 1959, Alderson 1960). This hypothesis says that the early years before puberty offer the most favorable stage for L2 learning to occur naturally and with ease. Later in this span of years, this capacity diminishes.

It is essential to investigate if L2 learning capacity declines over a period. In that respect, few studies thoroughly investigate SLA achievement between old and young language learners. David Singleton (2004) cites Seright (1985), who points out that only a few surveys that treat success and age-related issues between new and old learners show that the younger learners perform better than adult L2 learners. Furthermore, Seright supports her claims by citing an experiment on the learning of Esperanto that Thorndike conducted in 1928. Singleton says that this study shows young learners performing better than the previous ones. In addition, a survey of 1981 of Canadian immigrants who were learning French in an intensive language course also shows how young learners gained more success than older learners, or in other words, less success with age (Singleton 2004).

On the other hand, the evidence favors the theory that "the older, the more dependable" in terms of second language learning. However, Singleton points out that all of those investigations affected formal education. In other words, these investigations are short-term research and based on SLA in the primary school classroom and L2 bilingual programs. Besides, he notes that some immigrant studies' consequences indicate an advantage for senior scholars. Most of the relevant studies that Singleton mentions involve children as at least one comparison element. Hence, few subjects incorporate teenagers and adults of different ages, and that indicates evidence that older learners perform better than those who are older.

Evidence favors "the younger, the more dependable," Studies suggest that senior students can exceed younger learners. In addition, another hypothesis indicates that younger learners are highly efficient in acquiring a native-like accent in a second language. It has to be consumed into account that it is significant that the exposure to the target language is sufficient for this to occur. Moreover, this is confirmed by Singleton (2004). He states, "the strong version of this situation is that unless exposure to the L2 begins in childhood, an authentic accent will not usually be taken".

It is likewise significant to discuss if it is better to start learning L2 at an early age over the long run. Krashen et al. (1979) explore this subject further and establish the short-term and long-term results in L2 learning. They claim that:

- (1) Adults proceed through the early stages of syntactic and morphological development faster than children (where time and exposure are constant).
- (2) Older children acquire faster than younger children (again, in the early stages of syntactic and morphological development where time and exposure are constant).
- (3) Acquirers who begin natural exposure to second languages during childhood generally achieve higher second language proficiency than those beginning as adults.

There appears to be no clear evidence that can without a doubt conclude that children learning an L2 will outperform older language learners in the long run. Singleton's conclusion regarding this issue is that it is not possible to complete, based on current studies, that younger L2 learners are more efficient and successful language learners than the senior ones (Singleton 2004). On the other hand, Singleton does mention that there is highly reliable evidence to back up the hypothesis that over the long run, those who start learning an L2 in childhood generally gain a higher stage of proficiency than those who begin at later points in life (Singleton 2004).

Nevertheless, the works that contradict this theory are those performed in a classroom environment. Thus, it is challenging to compare classroom instruction over the long run and natural L2 acquisition that does not take place within a schoolroom.

III. METHODOLOGY

This chapter presents the research design, locale of the study, respondents of the study, sampling procedure, instrument of the study, data gathering procedure, and data analysis.

Locale of the study

The study will be conducted in Agriculture High School. This institution is in Agriculture, Midsayap, Cotabato.

Respondents and Sampling Procedure

The respondents of this study will be the 100 students, parents, and teachers at Agriculture High School. The researcher will make use of random sampling as the sampling procedure.

Data Gathering Procedure

A letter of approval to conduct this study will be sent to the school principal. The researcher will distribute to the respondents who are identified through random sampling. The questionnaires will be collected a few minutes after to ensure 100% retrieval. Data will be gathered, tabulated, and summarized for systematic analysis.

Research Design

In this study, a descriptive type will be utilized. A four-point Likert scale questionnaire will be used to elicit responses from the respondents.

Statistical Treatment

Descriptive statistics such as frequency, weighted mean, and standard deviation will be used in this study. A four-point scale will be used to assess the perception of Agriculture High school students, parents, and teachers towards aptitude and age and their influence on a child's SLA.

Validity of the Instrument

A pre-test will be conducted on ten (10) respondents to check and identify if the instructions and items in the questionnaire were relevant to what was stated in the problem statement. After the pre-test, the instrument will be subject to review, correction, and revision.

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