Psycholinguistics

Master 1 DID

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Second Language Acquisition (Part2)

Factors Influencing Second Language Acquisition :

According to Ellis (1985), there are many general factors that influence second language learning. These are:

**1. Motivation:** It is one of the most important factors in second language acquisition. Psycholinguists believe motivation as a factor that determines a per-son’s desire to do something. It is obvious that learners who want to learn are likely to achieve more than those who do not. The role of attitudes and motivation in SLA has been investigated by Gardner and Lambert (1972), who define motivation in terms of ‘the learner's overall goal or orientation’, and attitude as ‘the persistence shown by the learner in striving for a goal’ . They distinguish two types of motivation:

* *Integrative motivation*: a learner studies a language because he is interest-ed in the people and culture of the target language or in order to communicate with people of another culture who speak it.
* *Instrumental motivation*: a learner’s goals for learning the second lan-guage are functional and useful, for example they need the language to get a better job, to pass tests, to enable him to read foreign news paper, etc.

**2. Attitude:** Language attitudes are the attitude which speakers of different languages have toward other’s languages or to their own language. Expression of positive or negative feelings toward a language may reflect impression of linguistic difficulty or simplicity, ease or difficulty of learning, degrees of important, social status, etc . Gardner and Lambert have investigated a number of different attitudes, which were classified by Stern (1983) into three types:

* attitudes towards the community and people who speak L2,
* attitudes towards learning and language concerned,
* attitudes towards languages and language learning in general.

Certain personality characteristics and general interest in foreign languages of learners can influence them in a positive or negative way. It is also important how they feel about learning a particular language in a particular course and from a particular teacher. It is obvious that learners who have positive attitudes learn more, but also learners who learn well acquire positive attitudes.

**3. Age:** it is one of the factors that influence second language learning. It is generally believed that children are better at language acquisition than adults. Critical period hypothesis by Lenneberg proposes that in child development there is a period during which language can be acquired more easily than that at any other time. According to him the critical period lasts until puberty and is due to biological development. He adds that language learning may be more difficult after puberty because the brain lacks the ability and adaptation. Other researchers have also proved that learners who start learning a foreign language as children achieve a more native-like accent than those who start as adolescents or adults and they are also better in the acquisition of grammar

**4. Intelligence:** it is a general ability to master academic skills. Intelligence is defined and measured in terms of linguistic and logical-mathematical abilities. Success in life and learning should correlate with high IQ (intelligence quotient) tests scores. The studies on intelligence show a strong relationship between intelligence and acquisition of a foreign language but only as far as academic skills are concerned. Learners with high IQ achieve better results on language tests. It is proved that intelligence can predict the rate and success of SLA in the formal language classroom.

Gardner (1983) introduced a theory of Multiple Intelligences. He described

eight types of intelligence:

1. linguistic (sensitivity to spoken and written language, the capacity to use the language to accomplish certain goals);

2. logical-mathematical (ability to detect patterns, reason deductively and think logically);

3. spatial (ability to recognize and use the patterns of wide space and more confined areas);

4. musical (capacity to recognize and create musical pitches and rhythmic patterns);

5. bodily-kinesthetic (ability to use mental abilities to coordinate bodily move ments);

6. interpersonal (capacity to understand intentions, motivations and desires of other people);

7. intrapersonal (ability to understand oneself, to develop a sense of self-identity);

8. naturalistic (ability to understand the natural world).

He states that every person possesses the eight intelligences, which evolve in-dependently at different times and to different degrees. Learners should be encour-aged to develop all types of intelligences because they are closely bound and the growth of one area increases the capacity of the whole.