



Factors Affecting Second Language Learning Among Students

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ABSTRACT

English is used in many countries all over the world and is termed as the international language. English is mandatory throughout the system from primary up to middle, secondary and higher secondary classes in Pakistan. Also, it acts as a first language and a foreign language. To the students, English is regarded as a vital means of achievement. Nonetheless, many students face some problems at the school and college levels, which results to poor understanding of different lessons since these are taught in English. The study presentation in this paper is informed by the following objectives: It is an empirical research and based on interview to study the problems of students in Government Girls Fatima Jinnah Higher Secondary School Nawabshah. By refinement of the target subjects, the study aims at gathering data from secondary level students only. The article provides some prescriptions and suggestions for enhancing second language acquisition. Considering the principles of L2 acquisition we have to take into account the motivation, attitude, age, intelligence, aptitude, cognitive style, personality; all these parameters influence the language learning process.

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1. Introduction

The definition of language therefore is not straightforward and differs from one context to another. Jaffer Sheyholislami and David Crystal as well as other scholars affirm that language carries multiple meanings which theorists are very keen to differentiate. English serves as the second language in Pakistan and is an official language meaning speaking the language is privilege. Indeed, the use of English has grown considerably in the last couple of decades. In the approximations that he gave in 1985, the number of first language speakers of English was found to be 320-380 million while second language speakers of the similar language amounted to 250-380 million. Second language is useful and may even be official or representing the dominant society taking central positions in education and employment as well as interactions. Usually, persons from the minority or immigrants who have the different native language, tend to acquire the second language for utility (Saville-Troike & Barto, 2016). It is Patsy M. Lightbown and Nina Spada's research that underlines the role of cognitive learning styles in learning a second language. About learner profile, they distinguish between FIELD-Independent learners, which focus and pay attention to details, while FIELD dependent learners see the information as a whole (Fialová, 2022).

1.1. Young learners

In this particular concern, Jeremy Harmer has presented the ideas of several theorists regarding the developmental phases that a child undergoes with his or her growth (Siritman & Meilantina, 2020). According to Piaget the child first progresses from the sensory-motor stage and goes through the intuitive stage and the concrete operational stage and only reaches the formal operational stage where much about thinking is possible. Harmer also refers to Vygotsky

who pointed out the significance of the social interactions in the process of development. Vygotsky also noted that the child's process is supported by a knowledgeable adult providing 'scaffolding when the child is in the zone of proximal development, a phase during which the child is prepared for learning (Bapat, 2021; ul Mustafa, Abro, & Awan, 2021).

1.2. Adolescents and adult learner

Jeremy Harmer has listed several unique features of adults to be good learners, including their ability to reason, abstractly. This gives the educators room to go past basic entertainments such as games and songs and include more complex and effective learning approaches (Schulte, 2020). With another vehicle, there comes rich expectation and prior knowledge that influences learning among adults. Through such an experience, teachers can generate quite interesting and multiple activities and they get to understand that each kid is unique in his/her own way. On the other hand, Teenage learners require comfort in this aspect due to various complexities that they encounter while in this class that includes; identity crises, and self-worth battles (Getie, 2020).

The purpose of this research is to determine the facilitators to second language acquisition admitting that they are constant across the human lifespan. Specifically, the research seeks to: Specifically, the research seeks to:

- Stimulate the major factors that explain second language acquisition
- Cultivate ways of reducing the effects of these factors
- Add to the positive affect on second language acquisition

2. Literature Review

This is accented by the important of factors in language learning especially second language learning in improving the efficiency and performance of learners. This wisdom also ephasizes learners age, abilities, learning style, intelligence, and motivation towards the language learning enhancement of their accomplishment.

2.1. Factors affecting second language learning

It is widely agreed that age has a particular influence on second language acquisition, but the extent or its importance cannot be ignored. This is the feature of first introduction to a second language which determines the success of the learning process. As for the teaching process, a learner's age matters since people of different ages are different – they are different as to their needs, abilities, and, therefore, as to their perceiving and thinking abilities. For example while young learners such as the primary school children can easily learn a foreign language through playing, the others like the high school learners may require more formality in learning. One often found belief is that children from a tender age are the best language learners who easily pick languages in the learning process. Nevertheless, Pats MORE FL asy M. Lightbown and Nina Spada in their literature review present some studies which negate this position. Based on the studies they reveal that learners who begin using the second language at early adolescence can also have equivalent long-term proficiency as any other learner who begins in the Primary school.

2.2. Intelligence

Intelligence is one of the investigated variables within second language acquisition. To a great extent, intelligence has been defined in terms of scores attained on prescribed tasks. Lightbown and Spada studies suggest that different IQ means can predict a learning success when it comes to the acquisition of a second language. But subsequent research has indicated that intelligence measures might be more closely related to some components of second language acquisition than other parts (Lightbown & Spada, 2021). In the same developing, Lightbown and Spada have also pointed out that there are some learners who perform very poorly in their academics but remarkable in second language acquisition (Almeida Filho, 2022; Mansha, Yang, Ul Mustafa, & Nasim, 2022). This raises questions about the connection between intelligence and acquisition of language, pointing out to the fact that learners' potential cannot be determined by ordinary indices of intelligence.

2.3. Aptitude

Studies have indicated that while there are those who are more endowed to learn languages than others. Building on the Sternberg's theory of intelligence, Grigorenko, Sternberg

and Ehrman proposed a new dynamic approach to measuring intelligence or aptitude (Ahmed, Issani, Mahar, Mustafa, & Anon, 2021; Velanitta, 2020), Aptitude was also under investigation in the studies by Dörnyei and Skehan with regard to processes of second language acquisition (Hussain, MUSTAFA, Makhdum, & Ullah, 2022; Spada, 2016). Aptitude is commonly described as training-ability or easier still as the ability to acquire knowledge rapidly. A tremendous amount of work has been done to define aptitude to the extent that tests can be designed to determine how well a person can be expected to learn a foreign language in class (Ullah, Abro, Mustafa, & Ali, 2023; Wahyuningsih, 2017). The most commonly used assessments are the Modern Language Aptitude Test (MLAT) and the Pimsleur Aptitude Battery (PLAB), both of which consider aptitude to consist of multiple abilities, including: The most commonly used assessments are the Modern Language Aptitude Test (MLAT) and the Pimsleur Aptitude Battery (PLAB), both of which consider aptitude to consist of multiple abilities, including:

- Recognition and reproduction of other new sounds
- Knowing word functions in context
- Deriving general structures of a language from language instances
- Learning of new words (dos Santos Lima, Barcellos, & Spada, 2016; Herwiana, 2017)

2.4. Personality

Personality traits are regarded to be the important predictors of second language acquisition performance. The effects of personality on second language acquisition have been discussed in detail and different theories trying to predict the way in which some personality traits aid as well as hinder the process of language acquisition. These characteristics define the manner in which learners approach the language and handle the complexities of learning a new language and his or her relations with other people.

2.5. Extroversion vs. Introversion

Among all the personality dimensions that have been linked to embracing of a foreign language, the most frequent is the one that differentiates extroverts from introverts. These two personality traits are used to describe the behaviors of a person with regards to his environment and interactions which are both very important in language learning.

2.6. Extroverts

Introverted people are those that prefer to spend most of their time alone and or with very close friends. They are commonly stimulated by other people; thus, they often look for social contacts in which they can use their language. In lesson delivery extroverts are more likely to engage in aggressive participation in classroom discussion, collaboration, and oral activities. Their predisposition to interact with environment and other people can always turn into more environments that offer opportunities for using and practising the target language. Studies done on the personality and language learning confirm that there is preferred personality profile of language learners, in which extroverted persons are favoured mainly because they are more willing to take risks when speaking and are not discouraged by the possible mistakes they can make in public. This of course is because they are willing to communicate with people regardless whether they have fluent English or not, thus enhancing their learning ability. The learners who are generally extroverts may pertinently enjoy communicative methods of language teaching that focuses on how an individual can interact and speak as well as the use made of language. Their choice as to what matches well with language learning approaches that include speaking, listening and, interaction.

2.7. Introverts

On the opposite extreme extroverts are usually outgoing, whilst introverts are commonly more introspective. Introverts therefore are likely to look more inwards and may even like to engage in activities that are independently and may not enjoy group interactions or activities. As far as classroom learning is concerned, introverts may not be willing to engage in several group discussions/ oral skills as these make them uncomfortable or they take time to come up with what they want to say. However, this does not suggest that introverted students are in any negative way predisposed in carrying out language learning. It is therefore to the advantage of introverts to work in jobs, which needs listening, reading as well as writing since they are able to process information at their own pace. They are able to think out and study language structures in a rather profound way and gain greatest appreciation of grammatical concepts and

words. This may enable the introverted students succeed in language learning when some teaching strategies are used, which may include individual part-learns, writings, and reflection.

2.8. Motivation and attitudes

Motivation is a strong determinant to learning, and more so in the learning of second languages. Of course, it seems that even highly motivated learners may fail to achieve their long-term motivational goals in a process that is satisfactory for them (Dornyei, 1998). Motivation according to the self-regulation theory functions in the context of language learning by influencing the learners' predispositions towards success and the perceived utility of success which may further influence learning outcomes (subsidiary literature, (Anggraini, 2018). It facilitates and supports learning; enables learner to cope with challenges and persevere (Prayatni, 2019; Taqi, Ali, Parveen, Babar, & Khan, 2021). Motivation in second language learning is multifaceted, involving two main factors: the learners' communicative needs and the specific target language community perceptions that the learners may have. Interests were differentiated between integrative and instrumental by Robert Gardner and Wallace Lambert, concerning the motivation which is related not to the individuals' own personality development and cultural appreciation, but the pragmatic purposes (Marzuki, 2018). Integrative motivation is on the belief that the learner wants to join the community of the target language and this stems from having a positive attitude towards the language in question and the culture that goes with it (Uysal & Yavuz, 2015). In contrast, with instrumental motivation, learners' goal is the material and rational gain, including a job promotion, passing exams or getting to the university (Ergasheva, 2018). Gardner has observed that the learners with integrative motivation are usually preferred as such motivation comes from the desire to learn that language and understand the culture of the people of that country. Yet, pressure from the outside can have a deep dramatic effect on motivation, and result in a negative attitude toward learning. Other factors that have been found to influence motivation include, social relations within the system and power relations between language/s: these may enhance or withdraw learners' interest and commitment towards learning (Tomlinson, 2015).

2.9. Learner preference

Learner preference can be considered as one of the most influential factors affecting the process of knowledge acquisition when it comes to second language acquisition. Thus, while studying it is important to remember that every person is different and has his or her own manner of learning that depends on his or her inclination and approach toward studying. Such choices can greatly affect how well a learner is capable of acquiring knowledge, comprehending concepts, and applying them or retaining what he or she learns.

2.9.1. Learning Styles

For example the modalities used were Visual, Auditory ,and Kinesthetic. Learning styles are known and understood as preferred channel the human uses to grasp knowledge. They are often categorized into three primary types: Visual, Auditory and Kinesthetic.

2.9.2. Visual Learners

This means that for the students, who belong to this category, it will be easier for them to understand as well as grasp any information that is provided in a visual form. These learners prefer illustrations in form of diagrams, charts, videos, and other forms of displays that are used to explain a concept. For instance, while learning a new language, the visual learner may benefit from diagrams that display the written word and graphic figures that illustrate the word's sense. They may also like to write coloured notes and use picture charts in teaching to enhance language forms and words.

2.9.3. Auditory Learners

This category of learning involves listening as the main way of acquiring information by the learner. They learn better through the auditory modality or they love to listen than to read or even watch than to read or listen to something that is written in the blackboard or in a book. Auditory learner works best when the information is presented in Spoken language, conversational mode, podcasts or in language lab. They may understand the idea within seconds through the use of pronunciation, rhythm and intonation and should be encouraged to repeat words or phrases aloud in order to help them to memorize them.

2.9.4. Kinesthetic Learners

Kinesthetic Learners are of the type that needs to see something then learn it. They reason best by handling, touching objects and things and they understand material best through physical action. In this case, face to face settings may not be effective for these learners except if they are activities which enable the learner to physically engage with the content. In second language acquisition, for instance, the kinetic learners would be better off with the role-play or games and practising in real life situations and signal with their body. This sort of a physical learning assists in the consolidation of the different language concepts that they learn in class.

2.9.5. Learner beliefs

Perception is one of the critical components of second language acquisition since the learners' beliefs fall under it. Such perceptions are the existing ideas, stance, and assumptions that learners have towards the learning of languages. Such beliefs are normally developed from past learning practices, culture and self-reflections. They are of great importance in determining how a learner approaches the learning process, his or her attitude towards learning new content as well as his or her success in learning a language in particular.

2.9.6. The Influence of Learner Beliefs

Second language learners may not be aware of styles of learning they have but in most cases, these learners especially the elder ones have very rigid stands about how one can learn a language. These views may be as unique and different as the learners: adjectives, adverbs, native-speaking versus second language, and so on, can involve conceptions of grammar, rote method vs communicative method, or even the need for an environment that requires the use of the target language. For instance, a learner who has learnt that grammar determines fluency may spend most of his or her time memorizing grammar rules and doing grammar exercises to the neglect of practicing spoken language. On the other hand, a learner who integrated more of communication may spend his/her time mostly in speaking and listening skills, while the other facets of the language may suffer. Regardless of whether these beliefs are perceptive or not they are bound to influence the learner's attitudes and approach towards learning and may enhance or hamper the learning process.

2.9.7. Research on Learner Beliefs

According to the works of Pasty M. Lightbown, Nina Spada and other scholars, one has realized the significance of learner beliefs in class. They proposed that the attitudes that learners hold regarding how a language is learnt can cause an impact on either how multiple learners learn. For example, learners who have an individual theory that learning language is a gradual process where learners progress through certain stages and build up the knowledge gradually – with more patience, carefully step by step perform through difficulties and failures.

3. Material and Methods

The current study was conducted with a qualitative research approach and using interviews to the respondents in one of the Government Higher Schools where multilingual teachers were participating in the educational process. The reason for using qualitative approach was to gather existential details about the participants' emotions, attitudes and experience when learning a second language which can't always be captured by quantitative study.

3.1. Qualitative vs. Quantitative Research Approaches

A distinctive factor which can be used to distinguish between the two major categories of research approach is the way data is collected and analyzed. In this respect, it is useful to bear in mind that qualitative research stands opposite to quantitative paradigms of investigation that contain the number and measure overt variables, albeit within the context of positivism often enough. Quantitative methods are useful to establish relationships within variables and to analyze the results on large groups of people but they often do not include subjective aspect of individuals. On the other hand, qualitative research is appropriate to investigate the richness and details of people's lives, and thus, provides a broader perspective on the research theme. According to Bryman (2001), in qualitative research, there is an intentional emphasis of participants' understanding of social reality. This focus assists researchers to gain a participant's confidence in order to elicit their actual attitude towards a certain issue. Such observations appear vital owing to the fact that qualitative research tends to provide rich information that may not be measurable in areas of research such as language learning where emotions and human experiences greatly influence the outcome of the lessons.

3.2. Study Design and Data Collection

This study is designed with a prospective, cross-sectional, quantitative data collection approach. Since second language acquisition is considered a rather delicate and multifaceted process, the research plan selected incorporated a qualitative analysis to reflect that. One of the methods employed in the study was the semi-structured interviews, which is an efficient method of carrying out qualitative research. Unlike the closed ended interviews where respondents are presented with a set of questions that can be answered with simple 'yes' or 'no' or with a prescribed list of responses, the semi structured interviews are not rigid in their approach but at the same time specific topics of discussion are included in the conversation. This means that more and accurate data can be obtained since it involves the participants' perception as they give their views regarding the topic of discussion.

3.3. Ethnographic Approach

Besides the semi-structured interviews, the study adopted ethnography as an additional valid tool to enhance the process of data collection. Ethnography is a type of research approach that focuses on people and communities from the subject's point of view, therefore, makes it possible to understand the social relations in the educational context. Apart from being able to interview the teachers for their views, perceptions, personal and classroom experiences, the researchers were also able to obtain complementary contextual information from the teachers' behaviors, interactions with their students, and their way of conducting classes. Ethnographic approach was enriched and gave detailed picture of the teachers' practice and organizational tasks, as well as problems arising in the context of cultural and linguistically diverse students. This also helped in getting attitudes and beliefs towards language teaching they held which might not be easily expressed in the interviews. The most important reason for this selected research design is that it is designed to provide an efficient, effective, and practical approach to the research study and also useful for answering the set of research questions proposed in this research study. Semi-structured interviews and ethnography were particularly appropriate to the study objectives, since the former allowed tracing of the teachers' subjective experiences and perceptions of their multilingual practices in a government school. The use of qualitative design enabled the researchers to explore the different features that affect second language acquisition such as the psychological aspect involved in learning a new language let alone teaching it. This approach was advantageous as it was able to identify the peculiarities of the participants' experiences of the learning process and the conditions for language learning, which include the relations between teachers and students, the cultural background and personality of educators, and their attitudes toward learners. Such an analysis would have been hard to effect by use of quantitative data collection and analytic tools only.

3.4. Sampling and Data Analysis

In respect of participants selection, the study used purposive sampling which is common in qualitative research as the researcher recruited individuals with certain characteristics that would enable them to offer relevant information to the research questions. Criteria used for participant selection included the age of the students taught, the years of teaching experience and the extent of their experience in teaching in multilingual contexts. This way the study was able to collect information from as many and different people as possible, which widened the scope of getting the vast picture of the difficulties and solutions connected with the second language learning.

3.5. Strengths of the Qualitative Approach

To achieve the objectives of data analysis, the interview texts and the ethnographic notes undergo detailed textual interpretations. For the study of the phenomena, the approach of thematic analysis of texts was used, which makes it possible to single out patterns or themes present in the data. The use of this particular coding approach enabled the researchers to systematically process the gathered data and acquire a profound understanding of the specific factors that affect the second language learning from the teachers' standpoint. The fact that this study employs a qualitative method has the following advantages. First of all, it enabled direct collection of the detailed data that described the intricate process of participants' work. Second, the use of interviews following a semi structured format allowed for the investigation of new trends as emerged from the discussion resulting in a better understanding and focus on the research questions. Last but not least, the ethnographic part of the study enriched the results, owing to the background information that helped to analyze the collected data more effectively.

4. Data Analysis

The data collected from the interviews revealed several key themes, including motivation, challenges in language acquisition, and the impact of teaching methods.

4.1. Motivation

Students with higher intrinsic motivation demonstrated better proficiency in acquiring English. Those with personal goals, such as studying abroad, showed particularly high levels of language proficiency.

4.2. Challenges in Language Acquisition

The primary challenges identified were limited exposure to English outside the classroom and the absence of immersive language learning environments. Students also struggled with understanding English grammar and vocabulary.

4.3. Impact of Teaching Methods

The analysis showed that younger students benefited from interactive and playful learning activities, while older students responded better to discussion-based and practical approaches.

5. Discussion

The findings highlight the critical role of motivation in second language acquisition. Intrinsically motivated students were more successful, suggesting that language programs should focus on connecting language learning to students' personal goals. The challenges of limited exposure to English and the lack of immersive environments align with previous research, emphasizing the need for schools to create more real-life language engagement opportunities. The variation in teaching method effectiveness across age groups underscores the importance of tailored approaches in language education. Interactive methods for younger students and discussion-based methods for older students are recommended to enhance learning outcomes.

5.1. Case study

The researcher observed that learning English emerged as a major challenge. She believes that immersion is the most effective approach to language learning, but unfortunately, such a model is not feasible in her current workplace. She suggests that exposure to the language in a real-life environment, such as in the countryside, would be beneficial. However, due to time constraints, she hasn't adequately prepared herself to learn the local language. To address this, she has adopted learning aids such as a communicative grammar book and a phrasebook. Additionally, the researcher noted that some teachers tend to overlook factors that influence second language acquisition, which she finds insensitive to the needs of the host community.

6. Conclusion

The purpose of this research is to examine the different factors that influence second language acquisition of the secondary schools students in Pakistan. Based on the literature review and a series of semi-structured interviews with multilingual teachers, this study has identified and analysed several factors. Second language learning is determined by age, intelligence, aptitude, personality, motivation, attitudes, learners' preference as well as their beliefs. All of them impact the learning process to a greater or lesser extent. These factors very much have to be taken into consideration if one wants to improve the learning of a second language. Recognizing these variables, one will be able to plan and design teaching models that are unique to the needs of the students. The results have obvious implications for the application of the language education where teaching and learning process should take into account that students are different. In conclusion, second language learning is a rather complicated process which is mediated by various factors. This article presents findings of such factors and propositions to the educators as to how they can enhance student learning and enhance performance.

6.1. Recommendations

6.1.1. Increase Motivation and Positive Attitudes

Motive: Promotion of the general wellbeing of employees as well as the enhancement of positive attitude amongst them.

Integrative Motivation: Encourage propositions that would help to further the learners' goals of mastering the foreign language and learning its culturally by enrolling them into a programme in a foreign country or by attending such cultural events as festivals.

Instrumental Motivation: The emphasis should be therefore placed on the realistic gains, which can be an employment, achievement, and traveling around the world.

6.1.2. Tailor Teaching Methods to Age Groups

What does Teacher Adjustment of Difficulty Mean Explain How to Tailor Teaching Methods to Age Groups:

Young Learners: To this end, pay more attention to the play based and interactive ones that focus more on the sensory and motor ones.

Adolescents and Adults: Make the student utilize abstract thinking, real-life situations, and discussions in the course for it to be of help to them.

6.1.2. Leverage Intelligence and Aptitude

Give accomplishment tests to students; to identify those who have the right attitude, then, direct them to difficult practice sessions.

Ensure that there are extra teachers in a classroom and smart teaching facilities as a way of cushioning low intelligent student.

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