

Language Acquisition Theory and its Compatibility with the Classroom Setting

Lee Gerken

Bowling Green State University

ABSTRACT

This paper aims to map out the discourse of language acquisition theory and its compatibility with the classroom setting. In the second section I will briefly describe the research methods I used to verify L2 language acquisition theories with primary sources. The third section will attempt to summarize the procession of language acquisition theories within the field of linguistics in order to familiarize the reader with the discourse and the path it has taken. In the fourth section we will do the same from the perspective of educators and the application of these theories; The fifth section will focus on the compatibility between the language acquisition theories presented and the classroom setting. Finally I will integrate my observations and research with the discourse.

1. Introduction

How should language be taught?

How do we acquire language? This is the general focus of language acquisition theory.

2. Research Methods

3. Language Acquisition Theory Timeline

3.1. Chomsky and Exposure

The timeline of language acquisition discourse should begin by outlining the foundational work of Noam Chomsky, American linguist and philosopher. His observations on how we acquire language focus on children and their environment. This is his *universal grammar hypothesis*, introduced in his review of B.F. Skinner's *Verbal Behavior*;¹ that all children possess the faculty to acquire complex grammatical syntax solely through exposure to the language. So a child's native language (L1) for the most part is learned inherently through exposure.²

While this early framework created by Chomsky laid the foundation of language acquisition theory, his hypothesis *universal grammar* and his emphasis on the role of exposure has been refuted in much of the discourse³

¹ Noam Chomsky, "Review of B. F. Skinner's *Verbal Behavior*," *Readings in the Psychology of Language*, Jakobovits & Miron (eds.) (1967.).

² Salwa Saeed Al-Harbi, "Language development and acquisition in early childhood," *Journal of Education and Learning* (2019).

³ Anne Fernald and Virginia A. Marchman, "Language learning in infancy" in *Handbook of Psycholinguistics*.

3.2. Input and Krashen

American linguist and educational researcher, Steven D. Krashen, provided highly influential work in the field of L2 teaching. Namely his essential to the narrative of language acquisition theory.⁴

3.3. Intake

3.4. Output

3.5. Summary

Concerning language acquisition, the theories described so far suggest a narrative that has followed this path:

[exposure] -> [comprehensible input] -> [intake] -> [output]

This is not intended to imply that each theory has replaced the previous one. More practically, this suggests a pluralist approach invites each of these (word) into the vocabulary of how we might acquire language. Deborah Dubiner outlines this narrative in her article, *Second language learning and teaching: From theory to a practical checklist*, which provides a comprehensive summary of the themes in the field of applied linguistics for target language learning (L2)⁵

4. Language acquisition theory in the classroom

5. Research findings

5.1. Observations in L2 Japanese acquisition

5.2. SRS shift & online communities

tics, Academic Press (2006).

⁴ Steven Krashen, *Principles and Practice in Second Language Acquisition* (1982).

⁵ Deborah Dubiner, "Second language learning and teaching: From theory to a practical checklist." *TESOL Journal* (2019).