



SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION: AN OVERVIEW AND SCENARIO OF SECOND LANGUAGE IN CONTEXT OF BANGLADESH

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ABSTRACT

Mother tongue or first language is perhaps the most favorite thing for any person. But in today's world is a world of globalization. We need a second language beside our mother tongue. The way in which someone learns a second language is known as second language acquisition or SLA. Second language acquisition is a long process, which includes several stages. The aim of this paper is to describe the stages of the second language acquisitions. It also focuses on the status of English language in Bangladesh. This paper will describe a study which was made on 200 students of a university to find the difficulties of second language acquisition which the students faced in real-life situation. It also tries to give important suggestion and recommendations which is based on the study made on a number of students in a university which will be helpful in the teaching process of the English language instructors.

Keywords: Acquisition, Learning, Fluency, lingua-Franca, Materials, Interaction.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The need of second language is indispensable in the world of globalization. It helps us to communicate with other languages people in second language and develop a relationship with them.

Second language acquisition or SLA refers to learning languages in addition to the native tongue. The term is used to describe any language whose acquisition starts after early childhood. The study of SLA is usually considered as part of applied linguistics. There is no single way in which learners acquire knowledge of a second language. SLA is the creation of many factors pertaining to the learner on the one hand and the learning situation on the other. It is imperative, therefore, to start by recognizing the intricacy and variety those results from the interaction of these two sets of factors. Different learners in different situations, learn a L2 in different ways.

2. The difference between acquisition and learning

Language is the method of expressing ideas and emotions in the form of signs and symbols. These signs and symbols are used to instruct and interpret the information. There are many languages spoken in the world. The first language learned by a baby is his or her mother tongue. It is the languages, which he or she listens to from his or her birth. Any other language learned or acquired is known as the second language.

The distinction between acquiring and learning was made by Stephen Krashen process; whereas learning a language is a conscious one. In the former, the student needs to participate in natural communication situations. In the latter, error correction is present, as is the study of grammatical rules isolated from natural language.

3. Methods of second language acquisition

There are many different methods of a second-language teaching, many of which stem directly from a particular theory. Common methods are the

grammar-translation method, the direct method, the audio-lingual method, the silent way, suggestopedia, community language learning, the total physical response method and the communicative approach. Some of these approaches more popular than others, and are viewed to be more effective. Most language teachers do not use one singular style, but of a variety of learning styles achieve something.

3.1. Similarities and differences between L2 and L1

As far as the connection between age and eventual realization in SLA is concerned Krashen, Long and Scarcella, say that people, who come across foreign language in early age, begin natural exposure to second languages and gain better adeptness than those who learn the second language as an adult. However, when it comes to the relationship between age and rate of SLA, 'Adults proceed through early stages of syntactic and morphological development faster than children. (Krashen, Long, Scarcella 573). L2 learners rarely attain complete native-like control of the second language.

Table: 1- Similarities and differences between L2 and L1

	L2	L1
Speed	NA	Acquisition is rapid
Stages	organized stages of development	organized stages of development
Error correction	Not directly dominant	Not involved
Depth of Knowledge	Beyond the level of input	Beyond the level of input
Success(1)	Not predictable	predictable
Success(2)	Rarely fully successful	successful

4. Stages of Second Language Acquisition

Anyone who has been around children who are learning to talk knows that the process happens in stages-first understanding, then one-word utterances, then two-word phrases and so on. Students learning a second language move through five predictable stages: Pre-Production, Early Production, Speech Emergence, Intermediate Fluency and Advanced fluency. [Krashen and Terrell,

1983] How quickly students' progress through the stages depends on many factors, including the level of proper education, family background and duration of time spent in the country. It is important that you tie teaching for each student to his or her particular stage of language acquisition. SLA is often regarded as mimicking the way in which indigenous speakers acquire their first language and it is often felt that imitating this style in the classroom is the most useful way to help learners acquire a second language.

4.1 Pre-Production

This is the silent period. During this phrase the students get input in the target language. They may enhance a passive vocabulary of some 500 or so words but not feel relaxed using them; instead they are satisfied to listen while the teacher talks. They will be able to react to pictures and other visuals. They can comprehend and reproduce gestures and movements to show comprehension. Total physical response methods will work well with them. Teachers should focus attention on listening comprehension activities and on building a receptive vocabulary.

4.2 Early Production

In this period, students have a vocabulary of some 1,000 words and they can use them in circumstances. During this stage, students can usually speak in one or two-word phrases.

- At this stage, as a teacher, you can:
- Ask yes/no and either/or questions.
- Accept one or two word responses
- Use pictures and realia to support questions.
- Build vocabulary using pictures
- Provide listening activities
- Simplify the content materials to be used.

4.2: Speech Emergence

Students by this time have a vocabulary of some 3,000 words and they can use short phrases and simple sentences to converse. They can get implicated in simple dialogues and ask questions. They will comprehend easy stories read in class with the help of pictures. They can produce longer sentences, but they will make errors.

It is not necessary to correct those errors explicitly. For example:

Student: I go house

Teacher: Can I go to the house

Student: Yes, I go house

The student will hear your correction but will not inevitably be able to produce the correct sentence. This isn't a problem.

4.3: Intermediate Fluency

This is an extension of the previous stage; vocabulary has grown to some 6,000 words and students can produce more multifarious phrases and utterances, state opinions, ask for explanation and speak at greater length. At this stage, students will use strategies from their indigenous language to learn content in English.

4.4 Advanced Fluency

To get to this stage will usually take some 5 or more years depending on situations. Students have developed specialist areas of vocabulary and can take part in most language situations. Ideally, they will be using the grammar and vocabulary of an evenly aged native speaker.

Table: 2 Sample Teacher Prompts for Each Stage of Second Language Acquisition

	Characteristics	Approximate Time Frame	Teacher Prompts
Pre-Production	The student has least comprehension. Does not articulate. Nods 'yes' and 'no'. Draws and Points	0-6 Months	Show me Circle the... Where is....? Who has....?
Early Production	The student has inadequate comprehension. Produces one or two-word responses. Uses key words and well-known	6 Months- 1 year	Yes/ no question Either/or question Who.....? ...? What.....? ...? How many?

phrases

Uses present

Tense verbs

Speech Emergence

The student has first-rate comprehension

Can produce easy sentences

Makes grammar and production errors

Why....?

How....?

Explain... ?

Questions

Requiring phrase or short sentence answer

Intermediate Fluency

The student has admirable comprehension

Make few grammatical

Errors

What

Would

Happen

If.....?

Why do

you

Think.....?

Question

requiring more

than a sentence

Advanced Fluency

The student has a near-native level of verbal communication

Decide

If.....

Retell.....

5. Status of English in Bangladesh

Mother tongue or first language is perhaps the most favorite thing for any person. But in spite of that we cannot live in isolation. We have to be in contact with the speakers of other languages. To communicate with the speakers of other languages we either need to know their lingua-Franca that is comprehensible to both of us.

Today, the world has become a global village. Thanks to the advancement of communication system and technology. Every country is dependent on others for trade and commerce, education,

politics, etc. As a result, we have to constantly communicate with other countries and speakers of other languages. Third world countries like Bangladesh have to depend on foreign aid because they are not self – sufficient. As a result, many foreigners come to Bangladesh. All these factors remind us the necessity for learning other language(s) in addition to our mother tongue.

It is difficult to define whether English is used as a Second language or foreign language in Bangladesh. In spite of that the details description will solve at least some of the confusion about the status of English in Bangladesh.

English language is dominantly present in every side of our national life, but in the constitution of Bangladesh Bangla is declared as a state language and there is no mention regarding the status that is to be given in English.

5.1 Second Language

A second language is any language other than the first language or native language learned; it is typically used because of geographical reasons. In most cases, people never achieve the same level of fluency and comprehension in their second language as in their first language. Nowadays, English is considered the world's most widespread second language; it is used in areas as diverse as the internet, television and radio and international aviation.

If we look at the definition of second language, then we can easily say that English is the second language of Bangladesh. It is widely used in many parts of our national life. Many people watch English television channels and also the internet. The students have to study it for twelve years and those who want to join civil service by attending BCS exam also have to sit for English examination. The only thing that is missing from the above definition is the fact that, except for formal occasions no one speaks in English in Bangladesh. It is not the language used in home among family members and among friends in informal conversations.

5.2 Foreign Language

A foreign language is a language not spoken by the indigenous people of a certain place; for example, English is a foreign language in Japan. Some children learn more than one language from birth or from a

very young age; they are bilingual. These children can be said to have two mother tongues; neither language is foreign to that child, even if one language is a foreign language for the vast majority of people in the child's birth country. From the above definition, it is seen that foreign language refers to a language in Bangladesh since it is not native in our country.

5.3 Official Language

An official language is something that is given a unique status in the countries, states and other territories. But according to our constitution English cannot be term as the official language of Bangladesh since it has no status in our constitution. The only language that is mentioned in our constitution is Bangla.

In the constitution nothing is mentioned about the status of English in Bangladesh. English is not mentioned as a second or official language, so if we take the status of English in our constitution, then we cannot claim that English is a second or official language in Bangladesh.

In spite of that English is used in the education sector, law court of Bangladesh, it is used in administration as well as in the economic activities. From the discussion so far there is no doubt that English is the second language of Bangladesh but this reality is not reflected in our constitution.

6. A study

In this section, we shall look in detail at a study which was made to find out the reasons why the success rate of second language acquisition that is English is not optimistic in Bangladesh.

6.1 Area of investigation

There are lots of complexities of second language Acquisitions for the students in context of Bangladesh. As English is regarded as a second language of Bangladesh the students face a lot of problems in acquiring this language.

6.2 objectives

The study was conducted to achieve the following objectives:

- To find out the difficulties the students faced in acquiring second language in Bangladesh.

- To study how students can be motivated to speak English in the classroom and outside classroom in Bangladesh
- To find out why students of Bangladesh have less interest in acquiring second language that is English.

6.3 Questionnaires

As the study was made on the students so the students were provided some questions. The questions are

- a. Why the students find difficulties in acquiring second language?
- b. Why the students feel shy or hesitate to speak English in classroom and outside classroom?
- c. Why they feel less interest to learn a second language?

6.3 Subjects

Subjects were 200 students of a university in Bangladesh. All of them were native speakers of Bangla who were enrolled in a course name functional English and who were judged to be at an intermediate-high level of proficiency in English.

6.4 Research methodology

The present research was a descriptive survey type study. The researchers provide a question paper to all the students. The students are asked to answer the questions provided to them.

6.5 Procedure of data collection

After providing the questionnaire form, the researcher collect the information from different classes and the total number of students were about 200. The collected data were analyzed through the application of percentage.

6.6 Results

The study was conducted on 200 students among them different types of answer were given by the students. Among them 80% Students are of the opinion of the entire questionnaire that:

- a. Our education system doesn't make proper arrangement for learning system.
- b. The student's vocabulary is not enriched
- c. English is not our mother tongue.
- d. We do not use it in our practical life.
- e. Lack of self-confidence and thinking of others approach.
- f. F. Fear of using English properly.

- g. Others will laugh at them if they speak English.
- h. The student's mother tongue is Bangla so they find less interest to acquire other language because most of the time they communicate in Bangla.
- i. Teachers do not motivate them to learn English from the primary level so they find less interest in the tertiary level to acquire it.
- j. Our education system is textbook learning system. So we do not find interest to acquire it properly. We just acquire it to pass the exam.
- k. Among 200 students most of the students thinks that some steps taken by the government as well as the educational institution and above all our own effort can play effective role in improving the condition of second language acquisition. These are:
 - l. Motivation can play a great role in acquiring a second language that is English.
 - m. Everybody should use it in practical life and should realize the importance of second language.
 - n. To introduce training course to acquire second language
 - o. We should practice English at least 2 hours daily.
 - p. We should make proper arrangement of acquiring second language from the beginning of our primary education.

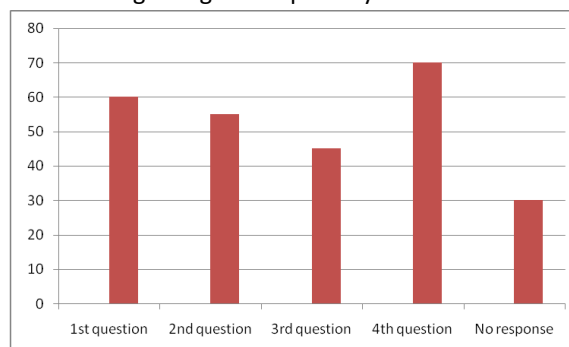


Fig:1 Diagram of the students same opinion shown in percentages

7. Bangladesh and English Language Teaching

The effect of using the traditional teaching methods has proved to be counterproductive, encouraging

rote learning. The students learn English as a required subject work hard to memories the textbook contents and language forms and get high marks in their exams, yet the majority are unable to acquire even a minimum competence in the language needed for effective communication. Parents in general regard English as a necessity for their children as they believe that it opens up doors to a better future. More opportunities for business, travel, studies, jobs etc. within the country and with other countries as well have made it necessary to shift the emphasis towards teaching communicative abilities, especially conversational skills. Sensing the growing demand and the necessity of its use, a conscientious section of educators, parents and administrators realize that something has to be done to improve the present sorry state of English.

7.1 Place of English in the national curriculum

English is studied as a compulsory subject in our curriculum to meet specific purposes, e.g to provide overseas employment, to help to transact foreign trade and commerce and to facilitate higher studies.

7.2 Use of the language

The national syllabus and curriculum committee has specified that 'The English language syllabus aims to focus on the four skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing as l's earner-centered activities within communicative contexts' (NCTB, 1995). But in reality, when English is used in a class, the teachers are more focused on teaching reading, translation and writing as these are the exam-oriented skills. (Hogue et.al 1997).

7.3 Problems in speaking

Bygate (1987) opines, 'Speaking is in many way an undervalued skill Which deserves attention'? In the present circumstances the students are able to read works in the original, but unfortunately are 'unable to ask for a glass of water.' (Dawson and Pospil, 1993). Most language teachers agree that to get the students talking is both the most difficult and also the most satisfying thing. Student's main problem lies with expressing their thoughts. And the possible reasons behind poor proficiency in speaking are:

- English is seldom used socially and is confined mainly to the classroom.

- Over emphasis on grammatical accuracy rather than on fluency, leads to a fear about expression.
- Over use of the mother tongue in English class hampers the development of spoken skills.

Moreover, spoken skill is not at all assessed in the primary and secondary level. When it is tested in the tertiary level, only language structure and grammar is evaluated, and if it is tested as part of a literature course, then only literary knowledge is assessed. Both of these methods of assessment encourage the learners to memorize formulaic expression.

7.4 Teaching materials

In our country textbooks at the rate of one title per class are produced centrally by NCTB, which all the mainstream schools have to use. All these books use the communicative approach to some extent. The teachers depend solely on the textbook contents and methodology for what they call teaching English. According to Mcrae (1991), the teacher who follows any course-book slavishly will inevitably bore him of herself as well as the students.

7.5 Students

In an unfavorable situation, when the English teacher explains everything in Bengali in the classroom, the students are deprived of an opportunity of listening to and speaking in English.

7.6 Teachers

Many of the teachers lack proficiency in spoken English. The fault lies in their educational background because in post-liberation Bangladesh. The decision of making Bengali the only official language affected the general standard of English. But most of the teachers have the requisite level of proficiency in grammar reading and writing. In addition, very often teachers teach things they do not prefer to teach, just because they have to follow closely the prescribed syllabus.

7.7 Teacher Training

Most of the teachers have no training in ELT and ones who have received training also face transfer problems; as Britten (1988) states, with their qualification, they tend to relapse into the ,old way of teaching. They also become reluctant to make proper use of their training because their teaching is hardly supervised. As a result they fail to impart

effective and enjoyable teaching by arousing students' interest in the subject and thus English turns out to be a dull and difficult subject on the curriculum.

7.8 Methodology currently used

Traditional teaching methodology, (teacher-centered grammar-translation method), as discussed earlier, is not suitable for teaching communicative English, but only for meeting the requirements of the present examination system. That is why, even if a teacher knows how to make her/his learners practice oral skills; she/he does not find it worth practicing.

8. Suggestions and Recommendations

To provide the students with the maximum benefit in an atmosphere where English is a second language, teachers should involve them in a variety of activities, e.g pair work, role-play, question-answer, discussions, projects etc. given in the textbook and also prepared by themselves. Student Participation should be given priority over teacher participation as the basic skills of language can best be practiced through learner-centered activities and so tasks should be interesting and relevant to the learners' life and environment.

In general the teacher's attitude towards learning English by the 'read and translate' method should be changed and they need to be made aware that translating is a quite separate and distinct skill from language learning. (Mcrae, 1991).

The language for classroom management, such as instructions given, question asked by the teacher, students and answers given should be English. Using English for this purpose will increase the amount of practice in spoken skills. This will give the students and impressions that English, like the mother tongue, can be used for real life communication.

As regards your error correction, the teacher should create an environment in which mistakes are accepted as part of the learning process. George (1972) opines that the correction of every error provides no guarantee that students will learn from their mistakes. And Burt (1975) suggests that limiting correction allows students to increase their motivation and self-confidence. It is likely that through practice and over-time students will develop their conversational skill. The students

should therefore be encouraged to speak first, not thinking all the time of correctness of grammar or expression.

Interaction is an important word for language teachers. 'In the era of communicative language teaching, interaction is, in fact, the heart of communication; it is what communication is all about (Brown, H.D 1994). After several decades of research on teaching and learning languages, it has been discovered that the best way to learn to interact is through interaction itself. Theories of communication competence emphasize the importance of interaction as human beings use language in various contexts to negotiate meaning. Rivers (1987) states that through interaction, students can increase their language store as they listen to read 'authentic linguistic material', or even the output of their fellow students in discussions, joint problem-solving tasks, or dialogue journals. Since interaction is thought to be important in naturalistic language acquisition.

As regards testing and evaluation, the test questions should be so framed that the students are not encouraged to memorize pre-fabricated answers, as happens now. Instead they would be compelled to think individually in order to answer them. They will be given contexts and materials that will allow them to develop the habits of thinking and expressing themselves in English.

Finally, learners become more efficient in their language learning if they do not have to spend time waiting for the teacher to provide them with resources or solve their problems. (Cotterall, 1995)

9. Conclusion

Bangladesh is the only country in the world whose people sacrificed their lives for the language. Now the historical language movement of 1952 is acknowledged internationally as the internationally mother language day. It is true that our people are emotional about their language, Bangla. However, it is equally true that now our people have become desperate about getting skilled in English language.

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