

Theories of Second Language Acquisition and Language Pedagogy¹⁾

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Lee, Kangsub. 2000. *Theories of Second Language Acquisition and Language Pedagogy*. *Linguistics* 8.2, 95-115. The field of second language acquisition is known as its interdisciplinary character. It is the case that scholars approach the field from a wide range of backgrounds: for example, anthropology, linguistics, sociology, psychology, and others. Through the multiplicity of perspectives, we are able to get a clear understanding of second language acquisition, an understanding that appears to be more representative of the phenomenon of acquisition because learning a second language obviously involves factors relating to sociology, psychology, linguistics, and others. In this paper, we will contrast the theory and research on second language acquisition from three different perspectives: traditional linguistics, psycholinguistics, and sociolinguistics. Then we will turn to some pedagogic issues on the basis of the three different approaches to SLA. (Sungkyul Christian University)

The study of the phenomena associated with second language acquisition(SLA)²⁾ is multifaceted and multidisciplinary, taking account of knowledge and research methodologies from areas such as linguistics, psychology, sociology, and others. Each of this disciplines has contribut

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2) The term "second language" (L2/SL) is used to mean a language acquired by a person in addition to the first language (L1). In other words, no distinction is made here between "second" and "foreign" language learning (see Cook, 1993). Furthermore, second language acquisition (SLA) is not distinguished from second language learning (L2 learning), as is done, for example, in Krashen (1989).

ed insights into the phenomenology of SLA. Furthermore, each of these areas has provided the SLA researcher with different perspectives, goals, and tools for studying the phenomena of second language learning. These different disciplines and wide range of research methodologies represented in these areas can provide a more complete picture of SLA.

Three major groups of researchers, among others, are thought to have contributed most to our understanding of SLA. The first group were traditional linguistics who used SLA in testing conceptions about language universals. The second group were psycholinguists who were interested in language processing issues. The third group were sociolinguists who were interested in how language is used in a variety of social settings. Since their backgrounds and research methodologies are different, these three groups of researchers have different focal points on the issues of SLA and different groups of subjects in their research.

This paper attempts to contrast these three lines of research on SLA and address some of the pedagogic issues associated with the application of findings based on the three different approaches to SLA.

1. Contrasting the Theory and Research on SLA

1.1 Traditional linguists' approaches

Traditional linguists tend to focus on SL learners abilities or errors when they are associated with testing hypotheses about the extrapolation of Universal Grammar to SLA. Traditional linguists claim that, at every stage of acquisition, the learner is operating with an organized system of knowledge. For second language learners, there are likely to be many such systems. If they attain the most sophisticated system, they can fully control the target language grammar. Each of such systems can be called an *interlanguage*

grammar (Selinker, 1972).

Snow (1983) raises a question whether these interlanguage(IL) grammars include “unnatural” structures. If so, then it is likely that second language learning is not subject to Universal Grammar (see Snow, 1983, 1987; Snow & Hoefnagel-Hohle, 1978).

Before we answer the question of whether or not second language learning is subject to Universal Grammar, we will discuss very briefly why the study of language universals is important to that of SLA. One of the early questions regarding the nature of second language systems is the extent to which the L2 can be considered a “natural language”. What does it mean to say that ILs, or learner languages, are natural systems? Obviously, all ILs are not as complex as all natural languages because the majority of complex syntax does not develop until late in the process of learning. We may assume that what it means is that if L2 learners could form a sophisticated form of syntax without being able to form a less sophisticated one, it would suggest a violation of a language universal, which in turn would suggest that the learner language is not a natural language. For example, there is a predictable pattern of relative clause formation in the languages of the world, such that any language that has direct object relativization also has subject relativization (see Cook, 1991).

(1) Direct object relativization

This is the girl whom I met the other day.

(2) Subject relativization

This is the girl who saw me the other day.

If we assume that SLA is subjected to language universals, we would not expect to find L2 learners who could form direct object relative clauses without being able to form subject relatives. However, we cannot say that there will not be a learner-language forms that violate target language norms and natural language norms. We just can say that in such cases those IL forms will be present in some world

languages (see Eckman, Moravcsik, & Wirth, 1989). Basically, the theory underlying UG assumes that language consists of a set of abstract principles that characterize core grammars of all natural languages. If children have to learn a complex set of abstractions, there must be something other than the language input to which they are exposed, and that enables them to learn language with ease and speed. As Chomsky (1981) points out, UG is postulated as an innate language faculty that limits the extent to which languages can vary. That is, it specifies the limits of a possible language. We can assume that the task for learning a L2 is greatly reduced if we are equipped with an innate mechanism that constraints possible grammar formation.

Before going back to relating the question of UG to SLA, we will discuss some issues about child language acquisition to explain the basic arguments of UG. White (1989) claims that on the basis of language input alone, children cannot attain the complexities of adult grammars. In other words, the input may be insufficient. Consider the following examples from Korean:

- (3) *Lee-nun chek-ul chun-chun-he il-sum-ni-ta.*
 Lee the book slowly reads
- (4) *Lee-nun chun-chun-he chek-ul il-sum-ni-ta.*
 Lee slowly the book reads
- (5) *Chun-chun-he Lee-nun chek-ul il-sum-ni-ta.*
 Slowly Lee the book reads
- (6) *Lee-nun chek-ul il-sum-ni-ta chun-chun-he.*
 Lee the book reads slowly

A careful reader may notice that Korean uses a subject-object-verb (SOV) pattern. If we assume an English speaker learning Korean and if we further assume no explicit instruction on adverb placement, there is little from the input that would inform our learner that (6) is rarely used by native Koreans. All the learner hears is sentence type (3), (4),

and (5). In an examination of syntactic patterns of American students learning Korean at an American university, Lee (1995) found out that almost all the students, when they are shown sentence type (3)-(6), prefer sentence type (5). This seems to suggest that a UG principle, the Subset Principle, comes into play. The Subset Principle predicts that the learner's first choice is to assume a smaller grammar, that is, the grammar that is a subset of the other. Thus, given a choice, a learner will unconsciously assume that the grammar allowing the more limited set of sentences is the correct one. Given an English speaker learning Korean, this learner would select the more restricted grammar (i.e., the English type). Because sentences in the superset would be heard, the evidence from the input could allow a learner to modify the hypothesis. On the other hand, the only way of changing from an English type adverb placement grammar to the Korean one is with explicit correction or instruction.

Many claim that direct intervention is indeed forthcoming and that one doesn't need innateness to explain language acquisition. However, in most instances the language-learning environment does not provide information to the child concerning the well-formedness of an utterance (see Chomsky, 1981, 1986).

Theoretically, there are two kinds of evidence available to learners as they make hypotheses about correct and incorrect language forms (see White, 1989): positive evidence and negative evidence. Positive evidence comes from the speech they hear/read and thus is composed of a limited set of well-formed utterances of the language being learned. Negative evidence, on the other hand, is composed of information to a learner that his or her utterance is deviant with regard to the norms of the language being learned. Negative evidence can take many forms, including direct correction, or indirect correction.

However, the child language literature suggests that negative evidence is not frequent (see Brown & Hanlon, 1970; Baker, 1979), is often ignored, and can therefore not be a necessary condition for acquisition.

Because positive evidence alone cannot comprise the range of possible and impossible sentences and because negative evidence is not frequently present, there must be innate principles that govern the possibility of grammar formation.

We will now turn to issues of relating questions of UG to SLA. Universal Grammar advocates do not make clear the relationship between UG and second language learning. There are a number of views about how UG is related to SLA (see White, 1990; Flynn & O'Neil, 1988). If UG is viewed as an language acquisition device (LAD) that many believe becomes inaccessible after the critical period (see Long, 1990), it would appear that adult L2 learners operate very differently from L1 learners because of L2 learners inaccessibility to UG (Clahsen & Muysken, 1986).

However, most traditional linguists suggest that UG may be at least partially available to the L2 learner, though perhaps affected by the L1 in ways that may make it relatively inaccessible. Long (1991) claims that UG differentiates between two components of LAD - the principles, which are universal and should still be available to constrain language acquisition at any age, and parameters, which constitute a set of options that may be somehow set by exposure to a L1. Long further claims that, especially if the L1 causes one to set a parameter in a "marked" or more inclusive way, the resetting of the parameter to the less marked or more neutral setting may be difficult. Examples of difficult-to-reset parameters for which evidence has been proffered through SLA research include head direction, for example, whether heads precede (as in English) or follow (as in Korean) the rest of the material in the structure. As a right branching or head-first language, English displays a structure in which prepositions come first in prepositional phrases (AT the school), head nouns precede their relative clauses (THE GIRL who bought me a candy), matrix sentences normally precede their adverbial clauses (He left when I was sleeping). In Korean, all these constituents are reversed. Korean learners of

English have persistent difficulty with imitating and correctly interpreting heavily right-branching structures, when compared to learners who speak Arabic, a language which matches English on head direction. Hyams (1986) has argued that it should be easier for English speakers to learn to reset the agreement parameter to allow pro-drop (the omission of redundant, verb agreement marked subject pronouns) in Spanish (*veo el arbol*, instead of *yo veo el arbol*) than it is for Spanish speakers to reset their parameter to always supply the subject pronoun in English ("Is a very nice day today, no?").

1.2 Psycholinguists' approaches

Like the field of linguistics, the field of psychology has influenced the field of SLA. In this section, we will outline an approach to SLA with a basis in psycholinguistic processing rather than in the structure of linguistic products: the competition Model. It seems important to note that there is an important difference in emphasis between linguistics and psychology in their relation to SLA.

Psycholinguists tend to consider language acquisition as a special sort of information processing (McLaughlin, Rossman & McLeod, 1983) or psycholinguistic processing. Under this view, learning a language and understanding a language are not so very different one another (see Nation & McLaughlin, 1986). Both involve parsing an auditory stimulus and connecting that parse string to a semantic representation.

If learning a language is simply a matter of processing certain kinds of information efficiently, it may be possible to say that learners who have already acquired several languages would be more skilled than monolingual learners. In fact, support for the notion of language learning as a processing skill at which one can get better with practice is supported by findings that multilinguals do much better than monolinguals in acquiring a novel, artificial language (Nation & McLaughlin, 1986).

Other studies also show that bilingual students have an advantage over monolingual students when performing those activities usually associated with language learning (e.g. Lerea & Kohut, 1961; Jacobson & Imhoof, 1974; and Albert & Obler, 1978). However, a student may be exposed to the potential for interference if he knows a number of semantically related languages (Ahukanna, 1980). It has also been suggested that students benefit from the potential advantage of prior knowledge related to the target language if similarities are made explicit (Browne, 1982).

One psycholinguistic processing model extensively applied to SL research has been the competition model (Bates & MacWhinney, 1981; MacWhinney, 1987). This model was developed to account for the ways monolingual speakers interpret sentences. A fundamental difference between this model and UG model is that whereas the latter separates the form of language from its function, the Competition Model is based on the assumption that form and function cannot be separated. According to MacWhinney, Bates, and Kligl (1984), "The forms of natural languages are created, governed, constrained, acquired and used in the service of communicative functions." A major concept inherent in the model is that speakers must have a way to determine relationships among elements in a sentence. Language processing involves competition among various cues, each of which contributes to a different resolution in sentence interpretation.

We now take examples of two languages with different word-order pattern: English and Korean. English uses a subject-verb-object (SVO) pattern.

(7) The dogs eat the bone.

Native speakers of English use a variety of cues to determine that *the dogs* is the subject of the sentence and that *the bone* is the object. First, a major cue that the speakers use to determine the relationship is

word order. Native English speakers know that in active declarative sentences, the first noun or noun phrase is typically the subject of the sentence. Second, native speakers of English use their knowledge of semantic roles of lexical items (dogs eat bone rather bone eats dogs). Third, English speakers use their knowledge of morphology which contributes the interpretation because the plurality of *the dogs* requires a plural verb (eat). In sum, all elements contribute to the interpretation of *the dogs* as the subject and *the bone* as the object.

There are examples in the languages of the world where interpretation is not so easy. Let's consider the following example:

(8) The bone eats the dogs.

Here, there is competition as to which element will be interpreted as the subject in the sentence. First, the bone ought to be the subject according to English word-order pattern. Second, the dogs is most likely subject because it is animated, the bone is not. Third, using morphology as a cue, it is the bone which is in agreement to the verb, eats. Therefore, in this sentence, there is competition as to which member will fill the slot of subject. Different languages resolve the conflict in different ways. In Korean, for example, word order assumes a lesser role in interpretation than it does in English. On the other hand, semantics, and pragmatics assume a greater role.

For SLA, Gass (1987) raised a question: How does one adjust one's internal processing mechanism from those appropriate for the L1 to those appropriate for the L2? Competition theory suggests that the cue strengths from the L1 are likely to be carried over into the early stages of L2 processing, at least if the same cues are available in the L2. If the cue strengths of the L1 and L2 match, they may operate in the learner's favor. However, quite often they do not match as we saw in the example before which illustrates some of the word order possibilities. If those cues illustrated before are in conflict with one another in the same sentence, then English speakers choose to rely on

first position as the strongest cue. In Korean, pragmatics is the most important whereas, in English, word order is most likely to be a reliable cue (McDonald, 1987; Kilborn & Cooreman, 1987). Thus, one's acquisition of a L2 can be impeded by the processing tendencies one relies on most (Gass, 1987). Gass points out that further developments can go in many directions; some L2 speakers manage to develop systems that mimic native speakers' system closely, whereas others, particularly in social settings that permit a lot of code-switching, develop for use in both languages a merged system that represents a compromise between the systems of monolingual native speakers of both languages.

Psycholinguistic processing approaches to SLA do not allow the distinction between comprehension and learning. Furthermore, in the view of psycholinguistic processing model, learning a L2 is just like learning one's L1 except that one is starting with more information. The focus of psycholinguistic processing model is performance rather than competence, strategies rather than rules. Even native speakers of a language can show alternate patterns of preference for various cues (Harrington, 1987), suggesting that the notion 'the native speaker' has somewhat less central status in psycholinguistic than in competence-based models. Proficiency cannot be a threshold that defines a native speaker or a perfect bilingual, because acquisition is conceived of as continuous and likely in response to new information in any language.

Since the amount of information available to be dealt with determines processing time, it appears to be natural under the view of psycholinguistic processing model that becoming a bilingual should be costly. Bilinguals show slightly depressed reading speed, probably because of their increased lexical retrieval times (Magiste, 1979, 1987), and may well end up completely unable to separate their phonetic (Caramazza, Yeni-Komshian, Zurif, & Carbone, 1973; Mack, 1984) and syntactic judgement systems (Mack, 1984). On the other hand, such deficits are minor, and are evidently restricted to situations in which both languages are relatively constant use (Magiste, 1984).

Psycholinguistic process model accounts for the skill in language as a function of its use (see Grosjean, 1982), or for significant amounts of attrition in one's L1 (see Cohen & Weltens, 1989; Magiste, 1987), since the accessibility of lexical items or syntactic structures in a language is strongly affected by recent processing history.

1.3 Sociolinguists' approaches

In this section, we will discuss external social and contextual variables as they affect the learning of a L2. The basic sociocultural SLA research focuses on many external variables (such as the specific task required of a learner, social status of the interlocutor, gender differences, etc.) which affect the acquisition of a L2. Many sociolinguists point out that multilingualism is very common across the world and more children are expected to grow up and learn two languages than not. They point out that language use is tied closely to personal identity, to cultural identification, to ethnic pride, to specific communicative tasks or situations, and to a set of attitudes and beliefs that have an impact on the course of SLA.

Lowenberg (1986) points out that becoming too good a speaker of a L2 can threaten the personal identity of the learner - that there can be reasons to remain less than perfectly bilingual if the L2 is one that has some negative associations for the learner. He also points out that, at the same time, perfect control over accent or grammar may not related to effectiveness in achieving communicative aims in the L2. Socially appropriate speakers of Korean express gratitude to a colleague by saying, "*komopne*," but to a person older than them by saying, "*komopsumnida*"; similarly a bilingual says "Hello," to a English listener and, "*ogenkidesuka*," to a Japanese listener. Failure to make these sorts of adjustments might reflect feelings of hostility to the addressee, or a need to project a certain kind of personal and social identity for oneself. It need not be seen as a failure of 'proficiency'.

Sociocultural model deals with many issues which are not discussed

in the linguistic and psycholinguistic view. Sociocultural model recognize the social nature of language use and does not acknowledge the distinction between better and worse varieties of any language. For example, varieties of English, perhaps variously described as Indian English, Australian English, Black English, Hawaiian pidgin English, non-standard English, public school English are spoken across the world; some are spoken in many countries only as second languages, and they have many non-standard features. However, these varieties are taught and learned for speakers of those countries, who actively do not value what is called standard English (Lowenberg, 1986).

Sociocultural model focuses on notions like communicative effectiveness and social appropriateness, rather than notions like language proficiency. It also focuses on the effective functioning in second languages of children and adults all over the world. Sociocultural approaches help us understand the social and cultural pressures affecting L2 learners in situations where the social value attached to their L1 and their L2 differs greatly. Honberger (1987) raised a question why it is that children of immigrant families in the U.S. switch so rapidly to function better in English than in their parents language. Neither traditional linguistic nor psycholinguistic processing model cannot answer this question easily, but understanding the value attached to both traditional languages and English can provide an answer. Why is it that in two-way bilingual programs, Spanish speakers learn English faster than English speakers learn Spanish (Thomas, 1991)? Is society's negative evaluation of Spanish speakers a factor in that situation? Why is it that Korean children of immigrant families learning English are likely to loose Korean (Subtractive bilingualism), whereas the Chinese immigrants in Korea will retain Chinese (additive bilingualism)? These sorts of questions can be answered by sociolinguistic model.

Sociocultural approaches to SLA do not put much stress on the importance of grammatical or phonological correctness, rather they focus on the rules governing communicative effectiveness and social

appropriateness. These rule systems are complex and as language specific as rules are for word order or morphology, though like grammar they have been described as having a universal 'core' (Brown & Levinson, 1978). Cultural system differs so much that those who can translate from one language to another with reasonable success can hardly ever translate 'speech acts' directly without making communicational errors (Blum-Kulka, 1983). You can never accept at face value Koreans saying "No" to an invitation. No matter how pleased they are they must decline several times first, and you must repeat the invitation several times. You ask, expecting to be refused, and the Korean refuses, expecting to be asked again. When a Korean person invites you to dinner, if you accept the invitation immediately without refusing at least once or twice, you are judged as immodest. You are supposed to say: "Oh, you shouldn't!" But Americans react with enthusiasm: "Oh, thank you!" It is not surprising, in light of cultural differences like this, that highly developed bilinguals think of themselves as having different personalities in their different languages.

One theory that offers great potential for understanding the aspects of SLA is that forwarded by Vygotsky and his followers. Its applicability to SLA theory and practice has only recently begun to be explored (see Schinke-Llano, 1993). Vygotskian theory is sociocultural; it holds that human development cannot be viewed independently of its social context. Rather, development occurs as the result of meaningful verbal interaction, that is, of dialogic relationships between novices and experts in the environment, be they parents, old peers, or teachers (Vygotsky, 1962, 1978). The theory recognizes the nonlinear nature of development: Learners both progress and regress as they develop. It focuses on processes and changes, not on products and states; and it acknowledges that each stage of development subsumes the previous one and that potentially development never ceases.

Critical to this development is the notion of the zone of proximal development which is "the distinction between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of

potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with peers" (Vygotsky, 1978, p.86). In order for learners to progress through the ZPD, they must move from *object-regulation* (a stage in which the facts of the environment control the learner) to *other-regulation* (in which an "expert" mediates by providing strategies) and finally to *self-regulation* (in which the learner controls the activity) (Wertsch, 1979). Important to the emergence of self-regulation is the use of private speech; such vocalized inner speech surfaces in times of psychic stress and represents an effort on the part of the individual to regain control of the task situation (McCafferty, 1992, 1993). As a learner progresses from object-regulation to other-regulation to self-regulation, the activity thus moves from an interpsychological plane to an intrapsychological plane. In fact, as Vygotsky claims, "Every function in the child's cultural development appears twice: first, on the social, and later on the individual level; first, *between* people (*interpsychological*) and then *inside* the child (*intrapsychological*)" (1978, p.57). Inherent in this view of development is the notion that thought and language are not "inner and outer manifestations of the same mental phenomenon, but really two distinct cognitive operations that grow together uniquely in the human animal" (Fredericks, 1974, p. 283).

2. From Research to Pedagogy

So far we have tried to summarize what we know about SLA from each of the three perspectives. In this section, we want to consider in what ways each of the three lines of research has contributed to language pedagogy. It should be noted, however, that SLA research in many cases was not designed to address the issues that concern teachers. As Ellis (1988a) pointed out, there have been many of the problems associated with the application of findings based on those three approaches reviewed in the previous sections. We have seen that

many of the early studies of L2 acquisition sought to apply the results to language pedagogy by making specific proposals about what approach should be followed and even what methodological procedures should be used in the classroom (see Krashen & Terrel, 1983). Certainly it may be wise for teachers to be cautious about applying the results of SLA research and to treat them not as much as "solutions" as "ideas for solving pedagogic problems" (Ellis, 1993).

The following issues are of central importance to SL pedagogy: (1) Should we teach specific grammar structures or should we just provide opportunities for natural communication? (2) What types of conditions should we provide for making classroom interactions likely? (3) How can we best take account of differences in students' learning style? In this section we will consider how each question is answered by each of the approaches to SLA.

2.1 Should we teach specific grammar structures or should we provide opportunities for natural communication?

Eubank and Beck (1993) point out that current linguistic thought as reflected in Chomsky's Government and Binding Theory of UG (Chomsky, 1981) has largely done away with a rule-based format, using instead a more abstract characterization of language as composed of innate, specific principles and parameters. These principles and parameters involve very complex cluster of language characteristics that bear little resemblance to traditional grammar rules and that, in fact, assumed to be unlearnable in the sense of school learning. In addition, within this perspective, first language acquisition is seen as a triggering process wherein certain input data set parameters to certain settings, which in turn determine various language-specific properties. To give only one example, the pro-drop parameter can be said to group such disparate constructions as the presence or absence of pronoun subjects and pleonastic pronouns (e.g., the "it" in sentence such as in "It is

raining”), as well as verb endings (e.g., White, 1989).

The assumption, then is that input containing one member of cluster (say subject pronouns) will set the pro-drop parameter to either “plus” or “minus” (in this case it would be set minus) which, in turn will cause the old members of the cluster to be required. Within this framework, then, the learning of syntax is seen as developmental and unconscious rather than a function of the conscious learning and practicing of rules.

Eubank and Beck (1993), reviewing the research literature in the area of UG, have also concluded that formal, explicit instruction and practice have only a short-term effect on the language behavior of second language learners. However, the practical implications of the effects of grammar instruction are not entirely clear-cut. Traditional linguists recognize that input through instruction interacts with learners’ current knowledge. Traditional linguists are concerned with trying to specify what constitutes the most suitable input for learning to take place. They acknowledge that it is possible to manipulate the input (e.g. by giving instruction in specific features or through the correction of overgeneralizations) in order to facilitate learning (White, 1987). There is one important difference between a psycholinguistic theory of language learning and one based on UG. In a psycholinguistic theory, instruction needs to be directed at the next stage in the acquisitional sequence for it to be successful. In a theory based on UG, instruction serves to trigger the setting of a particular parameter, which can in turn lead to further reorganization of the learner’s grammar. Sociocultural theorists don’t much care about this question, but would see SLA as strongly driven by communicative needs.

2.2. What types of conditions should we provide for making classroom interactions likely?

Linguists seem relatively uninterested in this question, but would

argue that teachers need to sensitize students to information about the target language. Psycholinguists would identify optimal conditions for learning with the opportunity to hear lots of sentences paired with information about meaning, perhaps with some manipulation for cue conflicts to sharpen students' hypotheses. They would also argue that, in the early stages of SLA, students have limited knowledge of the linguistic system and minimal control over that knowledge. However, as language acquisition occurs, the students become more aware of the formal structure and organization of the linguistic system. Psycholinguists, therefore, would agree that teachers should provide the students with more opportunities for practice so that the students can develop more fluent performance. Sociolinguists think that second language classroom interactions exist within a broader social context than the classroom and that a range of social, historical, and political forces that are embedded within the societies in which second language classrooms exist can, and do, impact upon what goes on inside classrooms. Sociolinguists would argue that either mutual respect or perhaps personal intimacy between the students and the teacher is desirable.

2.3 How can we best take account of differences in students' learning style?

Students vary according to whether they lean towards learning experientially or learning studially. They also vary according to how active they are in their approach. A student who wants to be fluent and is not bothered too much with accuracy will elect to learn experientially if he can. A learner who wants to pass exams and to achieve a high level of proficiency will probably be more studial. The evidence of the good language learner research suggests that to be successful learners need to pay attention to both form and meaning, to be active and to take charge of their own learning. Linguists argue

that a successful learner will be sensitive to information about the target language, and perhaps who cares for metalinguistic analysis as well. Psycholinguists would not predict large individual differences except those associated with efficiency of information processing. Sociolinguists would stress openness of a learner to other cultures, willingness to attempt to communicate with speakers of the target language.

3. Conclusion

The field of SLA studies may be characterized by three different traditions. One tradition is linguistic and focuses on the process by which learners build up their linguistic knowledge of the L2. Linguists believe that human beings are credited with an innate capacity to learn language which explains why the process of learning manifests distinct structural regularities. Another tradition is psycholinguistic; it focuses on the different ways in which learners cope with the task of learning and using an L2. Psycholinguists believe that human beings are individuals; they differ with regard to gender, age, motivation, personality, and learning style. Each person has his own way of going about things with the result that there is immense diversity in both the way learners learn and in what they achieve. The other tradition is sociolinguistic; it focuses on personal identity, cultural identification, specific communicative tasks, and a set of attitudes and beliefs that may have influence on learning and using L2. Clearly, many of the disagreements by researchers from these three lines of research reflect their interests in different aspects of the phenomenon of SLA. However, these different disciplines and wide range of research methodologies represented in these areas can provide a more complete picture of SLA.

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