

**ASSESSMENT OF THE FACTORS THAT AFFECT PEOPLE'S  
ACQUISITION OF ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE**

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**ABSTRACT**

*This paper assessed the factors that affect people's acquisition of English as a second language. The English language has long been utilized as a means of communication, especially amongst native and non-native speakers. The English language is one of the most popular languages to learn. The difficulties are typically related to factors relevant to Universal Grammar(UG) in the form of linguistic constraints. There are many general factors that influence people acquisition in learning English as a second language such as motivation, intelligence, attitude and learning styles. The study concluded that the most spoken language in the world is English, and many people choose to learn the language simply to place them in a better position to secure work or communicate more effectively with more people from around the globe. One of the recommendations made was that considering the fact that English is a second language the school management should provide adequate teaching aids, learning resources and modern facilities that ease learning and as well allow access for effective utilization of the resources as this will aid learner in lifelong learning of English language.*

**KEYWORDS: People's Acquisition, English and Second Language**

## **Introduction**

The English language is a global language because no other language is spoken as widely now as English. The English language has been utilized as a second language in numerous places (Melitz, 2016). The English language has long been utilized as a means of communication, especially amongst native and non-native speakers. Following their mother tongue, several countries have adopted English as their second language. In other words, the English language is known as an international language for communication, or a lingua franca. According to Ahmed and Labuan (2015), some people wish to study English because they believe the language would help them improve their life. Some people believe that learning at least two languages other than their mother tongue can help them get a better job. English is taken as the common language in all parts of the world. It may be a foreign language, but international in its significance. English language is spoken, read and understood in most parts of the world (Getie, 2020). Because of this language, people of the world communicate and belong to the whole shares of the world. It is widely accepted that English has become the language of choice for many international scholarly journals.

The significance of English as a veritable tool for effective communication has maintained an unwavering stance in both the local and international milieu. Its multifaceted functions span the horizon as a second language to non-native speakers and a foreign language to non-English speakers (Dozie, Ojilere, & Chidozie, 2020). It is unarguably a connective device that unites individuals' acquisition from diverse ethnolinguistic backgrounds, particularly in multicultural Nigeria. The widespread acceptance and use of English as a global language account for the numerous roles it plays in our society and the nation as a whole. The English language has become extremely diversified in recent years. Despite the fact that some experts label English's diversity in various ways, such as "World Englishes" (Jenkins, 2000), "English as a world language," or "English as a global language," the fact remains that English is flourishing globally in many forms. Due to growing migration into English-speaking countries, or the Inner Circle, those whose first language is English are now much more open to interaction with different forms of English (Seidlhofer, 2005). As a result, a growing number of English variants have emerged, each of which "leads in opposite directions" in terms of intelligibility and diversity.

## **Concept of Language**

Language refers to the system of conventional, spoken, or written symbols utilizing which human beings are used to communicate. Language is an arbitrary system of signs constituted by the signifier and signified (Hakim, 2018). Language is the source of the expression of thought by means of speech sounds. Language is the most powerful, convenient, and permanent means and form of communication. Language is a purely human and non-instinctive method of communicating ideas, emotions, and desires by

means of a system of voluntarily produced symbols. According to Neo-English (2010), language has so many inter-relations with various aspects of human life that it can be studied from numerous points of view. All are valid and useful, as well as interesting. Language refers to the system of sounds, words, and patterns used by humans to communicate their thoughts and feelings (Study Lecture Notes, 2022). In other words, language is first a system based on no logic or reason, and Secondly, the system covers both objects and expressions used for objects. Thirdly objects and expressions are arbitrarily linked. And finally, expressions include sounds and graphemes used by humans for generating speech and writing, respectively, for communication.

Language is the ability to produce and comprehend both spoken and written (and, in the case of sign language, signed) words. Understanding how language works means reaching across many branches of psychology, everything from basic neurological functioning to high-level cognitive processing (Lumen, 2021). The functions of language include communication; the expression of identity; play; imaginative expression; and emotional release. Language is a primarily human and non-instinctive method of communicating ideas, emotions, and desires by means of a system of voluntarily produced symbols. Evans and Levinson (2009) noted that a language is a structured system of communication. The structure of a language is its grammar, and the free components are its vocabulary. Languages are the primary means of communication for humans and can be conveyed through speech (spoken language), signing, or writing. Fromkin, Rodman, and Hyams (2014) stated that to define language is not an easy task. Various linguists attempted to define language in various ways. However, if we analyse the definitions closely, we will find that each of these definitions is incomplete in some respect or the other.

### **Concept of English Language**

The English language is a West Germanic language of the Indo-European language family that is closely related to the Frisian, German, and Dutch (in Belgium, called Flemish) languages. English originated in England and is the dominant language of the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, Ireland, New Zealand, and various island nations in the Caribbean Sea and the Pacific Ocean (Potter, 2020). English is also, for instance, the codification of a language in dictionaries and grammars, and in many contexts (particularly related to education), it also refers to literature written in English (Rindal, 2014). English is a universal language. When we meet people from other countries, at home or abroad, we need English for communication. When we want information on something of private or professional interest, we often search for it in English. In addition, English is increasingly used in education and as a working language in many companies (KD, 2013). To succeed in a world where English is the language of international communication, it is necessary to be able to use the English language and to have knowledge of how it is used in different contexts. Nordquist (2020) affirmed that

the term "English" is derived from "Anglisc," the language of the Angles, one of the three Germanic tribes that invaded England during the fifth century.

The English language is an Indo-European language belonging to the West Germanic branch, and is the official language of Britain, the United States, and most of the Commonwealth countries. English is a West Germanic Indo-European language that was originally spoken by the people of early medieval England (Wardhaugh, 2010). English language refers to the system of production of meaning for the expression of living by English people who were originally from Germany, but the language has spread to many parts of the world where it is used as a second, third, or foreign language (Sanuvickybless 2021). It is named after Anglia, a peninsula on the Baltic Sea (not to be confused with East Anglia), and the Angles, one of the ancient Germanic peoples that migrated to the area of Great Britain that later took their name: England. Living languages most closely related to English include the Low Saxon and Frisian languages, while English's vocabulary has been significantly influenced by Old Norman French and Latin, as well as by other Germanic languages, particularly Old Norse (a North Germanic language) (Svartvik, & Leech, 2006). English has ceased to be an English language in the sense of belonging only to people who are ethnically English. Use of English is growing country-by-country internally and for international communication.

### **Concept of Second Language Acquisition**

Second language acquisition is the learning of a second language once the mother tongue or first language acquisition is established. It is a systematic study of how people learn a language other than their mother tongue (Hoque, 2017). Second language acquisition, or SLA, is the process of learning other languages in addition to the native language. The process through which humans learn a second language is known as second-language acquisition (SLA), sometimes known as second-language learning or L2 (language 2) acquisition. Second-language acquisition is also the name of the scientific field that studies the process (Wikipedia, 2021). Some, but not all, consider second-language acquisition to be a sub-discipline of applied linguistics, although it also attracts study from a range of other fields, such as psychology and education. The process by which people learn languages in addition to their native language(s) L1 is known as second language acquisition (ELT World Wiki, 2022). The term "second language" is used to describe any language whose acquisition starts after early childhood (including what may be the third or subsequent language learned). The language to be learned is often referred to as the "target language" or "L2".

Second language acquisition refers to the process of language acquisition by a speaker who already has a knowledge of another language. The study of second language acquisition aims to describe and explain that process. According to the British Council (2021) Second language acquisition has two meanings. In a general sense it is a term to describe learning a second language. More specifically, it is the name of the theory of

the process by which we acquire or pick up a second language. This is mainly a subconscious process which happens while we focus on communication. It can be compared with second language learning, which describes how formal language education helps us learn language through more conscious processes. Acquisition is basically another word for learning. However, it is sometimes used for different purposes and meanings, such as in second language acquisition (Khasinah, 2014). The process by which a person learns a language is sometimes called acquisition instead of learning, because some linguists believe that the development of a first language in a child is a special process. In addition, Fromkin, Rodman, and Hyams, (2002) say that SLA is "the acquisition of another language or language after a first language acquisition that is under way or completed." To conclude, second language acquisition (best known as SLA) is a subconscious study through which a person acquires L2 or additional languages.

### **Difficulty in Learning English Language**

The English language is one of the most popular languages to learn. Perhaps the most spoken language in the world is English, and many people choose to learn the language simply to place them in a better position to secure work or communicate more effectively with more people from around the globe (Wilson, 2022). Learning a new language does not have to be a chore. Although it has its fair share of difficulties, there are ways to circumvent them. When it comes to learning English, everyone has a distinct learning style and experiences different challenges. Finding the correct study method could be the difference between learning a new language and mastering it (Valley Family Fun, 2019). There are three elements which have an essential role in learning the English language, especially in supporting English skills namely, pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar. Those three elements are called micro-skills of English skill. Students have difficulties in learning these skills (Megawati, 2016). Even for people who learned English as their first language, it can be confusing. It contains countless exceptions to what seems to be an endless list of rules.

Learning the English language also includes vocabulary as one of its difficulties. Students' lack of vocabulary in writing an essay Therefore, the teachers find many unstructured sentences because the students prefer constructing their ideas through "Google Translate." Similar to pronunciation and vocabulary, teachers still find many grammatical errors in students' works. Sometimes students do not know about the function of tenses (Lubis, 2020). They do not know how to use them in the right conditions, such as how to use simple tense and simple continuous tense in the proper ways. Learning a new language is one of the hardest things your brain can do. Not only do you have to mentally transfer linguistically complex structures between the two languages, you also need to learn how to think in a different language (College of English Language 2022). For this reason, learning English takes a lot of hard work and

dedication and is best done as a part of a specialized course that has been optimized to solve the challenges students face in an effective manner.

### **Factors that Affect People's Acquisition in English Language as a Second Language**

Second language (L2) users often experience a great degree of difficulty in identifying non-native phonological segments that do not form phonological distinctions in the first language (L1). These difficulties are typically related to factors relevant to Universal Grammar(UG) in the form of linguistic constraints (Petinou, 2017). There are many general factors that influence people acquisition in learning English as a second language such as motivation, intelligence, attitude, age and learning styles. The aim of this session is to present these factors and their contribution to success or failure in second language acquisition.

**Motivation:** Motivation is one of the most important factors in second language acquisition. Motivation is a factor that determines a person's desire to do something. It is obvious that learners who want to learn are likely to achieve more than those who do not. The role of attitudes and motivation in SLA has been investigated by Gardner and Lambert, who define motivation in terms of "the learner's overall goal or orientation" and attitude as "the persistence shown by the learner in striving for a goal" (Lightbown, & Spada, 2002). They distinguish two types of motivation:

- a) ***Integrative motivation:*** A learner studies a language because he is interested in the people and culture of the target language or in order to communicate with people of another culture who speak it.
- b) ***Instrumental Motivation:*** A learner's goals for learning the second language are functional and useful. For example, they need the language to get a better job, to pass tests, to enable them to read foreign newspapers, etc.

**Intelligence:** Intelligence is the general ability to master academic skills. Intelligence is defined and measured in terms of linguistic and logical-mathematical abilities. Success in life and learning should correlate with high IQ (intelligence quotient) test scores. The studies on intelligence show a strong relationship between intelligence and the acquisition of a foreign language, but only as far as academic skills are concerned. Learners with a high IQ achieve better results on language tests. It is proven that intelligence can predict the rate and success of SLA in the formal language classroom (Khasinah, 2014). The ability to perform well in standard intelligence tests correlates highly with school-related second language learning, but is unrelated to the learning of a second language for informal and social functions. It is assumed that some people are gifted and they learn foreign languages with ease. It was observed that learners acquire a language with different results despite the fact that they are at the same age and are equally motivated.

**Attitude:** An attitude is a set of beliefs about factors such as the target language culture, their own culture, and, in the case of classroom learning, their teachers and the learning task they are given. Language attitudes are the attitudes that speakers of different languages have toward other people's languages or toward their own language. Expression of positive or negative feelings toward a language may reflect impressions of linguistic difficulty or simplicity, ease or difficulty of learning, degrees of importance, social status, etc. Gardner and Lambert have investigated a number of different attitudes, which were classified into three types:

- a) attitudes towards the community and people who speak L2,
- b) attitudes towards learning and language concerned
- c) attitudes towards languages and language learning in general.

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

**Age:** Age is one of the factors that influence second language learning. It is generally believed that children are better at language acquisition than adults. However, only the studies conducted in naturalistic learning settings provide the evidence that supports this assumption. Lenneberg's critical period hypothesis proposes that there is a period in child development when language acquisition is easier than at any other time. According to him, the critical period lasts until puberty and is due to biological development. He adds that language learning may be more difficult after puberty because the brain lacks the ability and adaptation. The studies concerning the age factor were summarized by Lightbown, & Spada, (2002), who states that the course of SLA is not influenced by the starting age, but there is a relationship between the rate of learning and the age of the learners.

**Learning styles:** A learning style is also called a cognitive style. It is the particular way in which a learner tries to learn something. In L2 or foreign language learning, different learners may prefer different solutions to learning problems. Some learners may want explanations for grammatical rules (audio learners); some may feel writing down words and sentences helps them to remember (kinesthetic learners). And others may find they remember things better if they are associated with pictures (visual learners). According to Ellis (1986), cited by Khasinah (2014), learning style or strategy accounts for how learners accumulate new L2 rules and how they automate existing ones. He described learning styles as "the characteristic cognitive, affective, and physiological behaviors that serve as relatively stable indicators of how learners perceive, interact with, and respond to the learning environment." Students' learning styles can be influenced by

many factors, among which are their genetic background, their culture, and previous learning experience.

### **Conclusion**

The study concluded that the most spoken language in the world is English, and many people choose to learn the language simply to place them in a better position to secure work or communicate more effectively with more people from around the globe. Learning a new language does not have to be a chore. Although it has its fair share of difficulties, there are ways to circumvent them. However, when it comes to learning English as a second language, everyone has a distinct learning style and experiences different challenges.

### **Recommendations**

1. Considering the fact that English is a second language the school management should provide adequate teaching aids, learning resources and modern facilities that ease learning and as well allow access for effective utilization of the resources as this will aid learner in lifelong learning of English language.
2. Teachers should apply captivating teaching techniques in teaching students in order to enhance their levels of assimilation of the lessons well.



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