

## SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES BETWEEN L1 AND L2 LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

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### **Annotation.**

In an attempt to understand and explain first language (L1) and second language (L2) acquisition, scholars have advanced many theories. These theories help language teachers understand language learning and help their students in the language learning process. The current article first examines the similarities between L1 and L2 acquisition. Next, the differences are described.

**Keywords:** Development, language, strategies, articles, influence

The comparison and contrast of first language (L1) and second language (L2) acquisition has shed light on various aspects that are valuable for language teachers. The notion of Interlanguage, which highlights the dynamic nature of language change and the unique system it forms, has been notable in understanding L2 acquisition. Interlanguage can be considered as the interim grammar that second language learners construct as they progress toward acquiring the target language. It is a developing knowledge system that exhibits characteristics of both the learner's native and second languages, in addition to some general characteristics. Notably, the systematic, dynamic, and constantly evolving nature of Interlanguage sets it apart as a unique linguistic system.

Furthermore, the developmental sequences of L2 acquisition exhibit some similarities to those of L1 acquisition, while also displaying differences. These findings have important implications for language teachers, guiding them in the design of syllabuses, teaching processes, and classroom activities. Understanding the similarities and differences between L1 and L2 acquisition processes can help teachers facilitate their students' learning effectively.

The research highlights the similarities between first and second language acquisition, particularly in terms of developmental stages. Both first and second-language learners seem to exhibit a silent period, where they focus on listening and understanding the language before actively producing it. This has been observed in natural settings for both first and second-language learners. The understanding of this silent period and its impact on second language acquisition is an area of ongoing study and debate within the field.

In the second developmental stage, known as formulaic speech, learners use expressions that are learned as unanalyzable wholes and used in specific situations. These expressions can take the form of routines (memorized chunks), patterns (partially unanalyzed utterances), and entire scripts such as greetings. Formulaic speech is observed in both first and second language acquisition, as well as in the speech of adult native speakers.

In the third stage, both first and second-language learners simplify their language structurally and semantically. Structural simplifications involve omitting grammatical elements like articles and auxiliary verbs, while semantic simplifications involve omitting content words like nouns and verbs. This simplification may occur because learners have not yet acquired the necessary linguistic forms or cannot access them during production.

These stages demonstrate that both L1 and L2 learners go through similar developmental sequences, with the exception that L2 learners are encouraged to skip the silent period. Additionally, learners show patterns in the order in which they acquire certain grammatical morphemes.

There are two main approaches to linguistic universals. The first approach, proposed by Greenberg (1966, as cited in Ellis 1994), is known as typological universals. This approach involves comparing a wide range of languages from different language families to identify common features, such as the presence of nouns and verbs in all languages. The second approach is associated with the generative school, as represented by Chomsky. This approach focuses on studying individual languages in-depth to uncover the underlying principles of grammar that govern specific linguistic rules.

From a usage-based perspective, the acquisition of grammar is seen as the gradual accumulation of knowledge about thousands of words and constructions. Instead of assuming that learners have an innate abstract grammar, usage-based theories propose that the patterns and regularities in the language input play a crucial role in the emergence of linguistic abstractions.

According to Croft and Cruse (2004), usage-based approaches emphasize the significance of the input characteristics and the interaction between the input and the learner's existing linguistic system. In this view, language acquisition involves two main types of patterns: a building-up process, where individual words are combined to form larger structures, and a breaking-down process, where unanalyzed language chunks are deconstructed into smaller units.

In recent years, the breaking-down process has garnered considerable attention as it is believed to be essential for the development of creative language use. This process involves learners breaking down and analyzing language chunks, leading to a deeper understanding of language structure and facilitating the production of novel and creative expressions.

Researchers have tried to understand how children progress from having no language to acquiring their mother tongue, and the Interlanguage Theory is crucial in explaining how second-language (L2) learners move from their native language toward the target language. However, the process of L2 acquisition is more complex than first-language (L1) acquisition, as learners already know their L1.

Language learning depends on various factors, and teachers need to consider these factors when designing classroom activities, syllabi, and teaching methods.

The similarities and differences between L1 and L2 acquisition provide valuable information for language teachers. For example, understanding developmental sequences is important for the cognitive development of learners. In L1 acquisition, learners have the opportunity to remain silent and process input, but this may not be feasible in L2 acquisition due to teaching conditions and grading regulations. This understanding can help teachers recognize and address issues such as erroneous production, inhibited students, or high anxiety in the classroom.

While the idea of a silent period may not be directly applicable to teaching L2, it provides insight into why some students resist or avoid producing the language being taught. By considering these similarities and differences, language teachers can better understand their students' learning processes and guide them effectively in the language learning journey.

The issue of input is crucial in both first language (L1) and second language (L2) acquisition and it has direct implications for language teachers. Teachers are the primary source of input in the classroom, and providing comprehensible input requires them to adjust their language to the student's level and speak at a pace that students can follow. Using various activities that encourage student interaction, such as pair work, information gap activities, and classroom discussions, can also provide valuable input. However, overwhelming students with input that is beyond their language capacity can lead to a lack of self-confidence and resistance to learning the language. Therefore, teachers need to provide input that is aimed at the level of the students to promote effective language learning.

Although the Behavioristic approach does not fully explain the creative aspect of language production, it helps in understanding how stimulus and response contribute to mastering grammatical and phonological patterns in teaching and learning. The effective use of stimulus and response in teaching depends on the teacher's ability to identify when it can be beneficial for learning.

The final issue related to the similarities of L1 and L2 acquisition is the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). This concept emphasizes the importance of assistance and collaboration, which has useful implications for language teachers. Teachers should aim to assist their students as much as possible by providing them with the language necessary to progress to the next level of language competence. The role of the teacher is to guide students' actions within school activities in a manner appropriate to the learners' level of development and the cultural and social environment (Daniels, 1996).

Teachers can promote teacher-student interaction or peer interaction, as Hawkins (2001) suggests "It is via this kind of interaction that knowledge very gradually gets built" (p. 374). Collaborative activities such as pair work or group work, where students are required to negotiate meaning, can be beneficial. Furthermore, teachers could use the ZPD to understand aspects of students'

emerging capacities. Language tests should be viewed as indicators of students' achieved abilities and also their future capabilities.

When considering the differences between L1 and L2 acquisition, it's important to start with the terms "acquisition" and "learning." Although learning and acquisition are argued to be separate processes, language teachers need to consider the possibility that extensive classroom practices can lead to acquisition. However, you must remember that not everything that is taught can be mastered. Therefore, expectations regarding the quality of learning should be set realistically.

In conclusion, crucial for language teachers to have a deep understanding of the complexities involved in L1 and L2 acquisition. Recognizing both the similarities and differences between these processes allows teachers to tailor their instructional approaches to meet the diverse needs of their students. Acknowledging that L1 and L2 acquisition are interconnected and influenced by multiple factors is essential. Teachers should avoid relying solely on one explanatory factor when developing their teaching strategies. Instead, they should critically analyze and synthesize various theories and research findings before applying them in the classroom.

Ultimately, language teachers should integrate their theoretical knowledge with the specific context of their teaching environment. By doing so, they can create effective and responsive instructional approaches that address the complexities of L1 and L2 acquisition.

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