

# FIRST AND SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION COMPARED

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Comparing First and Second Language Acquisition has been the focus of interest of researchers in the fields of Linguistics, Psycholinguistics and Teaching a Second or Foreign Language. However, it has proven to be a very complex area to deal with. For example, many different views have evolved throughout the history of its development, and theories resulting from such an extensive investigation have led to different approaches to the study, learning and teaching of second languages. Just to mention, Skinner's behaviorism led to audio-lingual and structural methods, Chomsky's mentalistic view led to generativism and then to communicative approaches. Also, hypotheses arising from these investigations have also been submitted to a rigorous and critical scrutiny in order to test their validity. For example, Krashen's monitor, input, acquisition-learning, the natural-order and the affective filter hypotheses have been criticized (Mc Laughlin, 1987). Different criteria for establishing parameters and frameworks for such a comparison appear to be very complex and interwoven. For example, it is not the same to compare L1 with L2 in general, than to look at other variables such as age as when we compare children's L1 with adult's L2 (see Brown's schema p. 45). But the most important point for TESOL is that comparing L1 and L2 should be an integral part of the teacher's understanding of how language has developed. Though complex it is for researchers, teachers should have at least an overview of language development so that they can have an understanding of its implications whether theoretical or practical. As Brown (1980) points out when referring to Stern (1970), Jakobovitz (1968), Cook (1969-1973), Macnamara (1975) and others, "...they began to address the inconsistencies of direct analogies between first and second language learning but at the same time recognized the legitimate similarities which, if viewed cautiously, allowed one to draw some constructive conclusions about second language learning" (Brown p.44).

The purpose of this essay is to compare some of the current assumptions about L1 and L2 acquisition to see to what extent is it meaningful to draw such a comparison and draw some implications for TESOL. I will first deal with L1 and L2 similarities and differences and

comment on them. Second, I will summarize some implications for language teaching. Finally, I will draw some general conclusions.

## I. COMPARISON OF L1 AND L2 ACQUISITION

### A. SIMILARITIES

#### 1. THE COGNITIVE DOMAIN

##### a. Both L1 and L2 are the result of human cognitive development.

Studies from psychologists as Piaget, Vigotsky, Bruner, Donaldson, etc. have tried to characterize both human cognitive development and language development (Shorrock, 1991). The most influential theory has been the Piagetian's conception of children passing through a series of stages before they construct the ability to perceive, reason and understand in mature rational terms. These stages include: "sensory-motor" (0 to 18 months approximately), "concrete operational" (18 months to 11 years approximately), and a "formal operation" period (11 years onwards). This last one is divided into the "pre-operational" which lasts until around the age of seven during which the "concrete operations" are being prepared for and the "operational" proper during which they are established and consolidated. These concepts let educationalists devise some categories for syllabus design that took into account Piaget's transitions. For example, they considered puberty as the most critical stage for second language acquisition because it is here that a person becomes capable of abstraction, of formal thinking which transcends concrete experience and direct perception (Brown, p.50). The benefits of mature thinking were suggested for adults learning a second language because they could profit from grammatical explanations and deductive thinking that obviously would be pointless for a child (Ausubel, 1964 in Brown, 1980).

However, Piaget's work has been criticized recently by psychologists such as Donaldson (1978), Bruner (1983), Vigotsky (1978) in Shorrock (1991, p.263).

The main criticism to Piaget's theory is that he underestimated the importance of language and he argued that language exerts no formative effects on the structure of thinking; mental actions and operations are derived from action, not talk. Donaldson points out that children's minds grow and develop intellectually as they "move beyond the bounds of human sense". It is in this movement that all the higher intellectual skills depend. Research has shown that under propitious circumstances, even quite young children can think with a degree of logic, remember with some degree of efficiency and can see the world from another person's position (Shorrocks p.263). For Vigotsky, speech comes to form a higher mental process, including the ability to plan, evaluate, memorize and reason. These processes are in Vigotsky's view culturally formed in social interaction.

Thus, these recent views of language development supports the statements that language in general, involves a process of cognitive development.

**b. Both L1 and L2 acquirers or learners make use of cognitive mechanisms to make sense of the linguistic system itself.**

Studies on children's idiosyncratic system have provided researchers with evidence of the learning strategies and mechanisms the child employs. Similarly, studies on second language learner's mechanisms were carried out to look at similarities. The notion was that the second language learners' too, could be viewed as actively constructing rules in the direction of the target language system. Error analysis gave evidence for the learner's developing systems and offered insights into how they processed data of language. Researchers found that errors due to transferring rules from the mother tongue were often similar to those produced by the child in the mother tongue and suggested that the second language learner is employing similar strategies, notably generalization and simplification (Littlewood pp.22-35). They are explained as follows:

- Overgeneralization which is used both by L1 and L2 learners. In order to make sense of the world, we allocate items to categories, and on the basis of these categories we construct "rules" which predict how the different items will behave. But these predictions may be wrong because the rule does not apply to this particular item and is therefore an exception to the rule or the item belonging to a different category. As a result, the error is due to overgeneralization of the rule which caused the wrong prediction. The most common example is allocation of -s morpheme to form a plural and we

apply it to all the nouns even to the exceptions such as child-\*childs\* or \*childrens\*, man-\*mans\*, mouse -\*mouses\*, etc.

- Simplification is a strategy used by both L1 and L2 learners. They make data more manageable by fitting them into a framework of categories and rules that the learner already possess. For example, the case of the child's telegraphic speech which is also called "redundancy reduction": \*daddy want chair\*, \*mommy sock\* are classical examples of this reduction. Also, a Spanish speaking learner of English will produce \*no understand\* (*no entiendo*) or \*you understand me?\* (*tu me entiendes?*) where he deletes the auxiliary for the question form.
- Communication Strategies Second and first language learners often have communicative intentions which they have difficulty in expressing because of gaps in their linguistic repertoire. So they may avoid communication or modify what they intend to say, or find alternative ways of getting the meaning across. The strategies commonly used are: avoid communicating, adjust the message, use paraphrase, use approximation, create new words, use of non-linguistic sources such as mime, gestures or imitation. (For further illustration, see Littlewood, chapter 3).

**c. Learners of both L1 and L2 may have an internal syllabus or may follow a route of acquisition.**

According to Littlewood (p.34), the learner approaches the learning task with active strategies which help him to construct the rules that underlie the second language. This is called the "creative construction" hypothesis which accounts for the different steps through which he proceeds in learning a language. Studies of first language acquisition give evidence of a strong possibility that second language learners follow similar learning sequences. Also, it is often said that second language learners may be endowed with an "internal syllabus" or "built-in-syllabus" upon which they construct the second language system.

On the other hand, one of the assumptions of the Contrastive Analysis hypothesis was that learners with different languages would learn a L2 in different ways as a result of negative transfer imposing different kinds of difficulty which is the opposite view to the "universal route". These two opposing views were the result of many years of contrastive analysis research based mainly on error analysis (Klima & Bellugi, 1966; Brown, 1973; Hatch 1978a; Dulay, et al. 1982). Samples of learners' errors were corrected and then examined in longitudinal

studies to test whether these errors occurred in L1 acquisition and resembled the ones in L2 development. Dulay et al.'s longitudinal studies showed that there were striking similarities in the way L2 learners learned an L2. This route resembles that reported for L1 acquisition but is not identical with it. They found similarities in the way negation and interrogatives develop in different language even in languages of different types as German and Japanese as well as in advanced grammatical structure such as relatives clauses. However, according to Ellis (1985), the universality of the interlanguage continuum needs to be tempered by the recognition that there are differences traceable both to the learner's L1 and also to individual preferences. He points out that there must be a distinction between sequence of development and order of development. The sequence refers to the overall development profile which is universal and the product of the process of creative construction. Thus, some individual differences in the order of morphosyntactic features will be evident within the natural order sequence of development. That is, "learners take the same road but they do not necessarily drive along it the same way." They follow a standard sequence but vary in the order in which specific features are acquired.

An alternative to this "universal route" has been the "interlanguage continuum" first used by Selinker (1972) in Ellis (1985) that refers to the structural system which the learner constructs at any given stage, i.e. an "interlanguage". Nemser (1971) explains "interlanguage" in this way: 1) at any given time the approximative system is distinct from L1 and L2; 2) the approximative systems forms an evolving series; and 3) that in a given contact situation, the approximative system of learners at the same stage of proficiency roughly coincide. The concept of "hypothesis-testing" was used to explain how the L2 learners progressed along the interlanguage continuum, in much the same way as it was used to explain L1 acquisition. Corder (1967) made this comparison explicit by proposing that at least some of the strategies used by the L2 learners were the same as those by which L1 acquisition takes place. In particular, Corder suggested that both L1 and L2 learners make errors in order to test out certain hypotheses about the nature of the language they are learning. Corder saw the making of errors as a strategy, evidence of learner-internal processing (see section on strategies).

**d. L1 and L2 learners make sense of reality in context.**

Recently, the scope of language acquisition has extended to social contexts. Goyvaerts (in Rogers, 1975) suggests that "language is a process by which the individual internalizes the social structures".

Sociolinguists have suggested that children make sense of language in interaction in the same way as L2 learners. This view maintains that a child is born into a community of language users and his/her learning of language forms part of the socialization as a member of a community. Bruner (1983) points out that infants enter the world of language and culture with a readiness to find or invent systematic ways of dealing with social requirements and linguistic forms (Donaldson, 1978; Wells, 1985; Halliday, 1969). Halliday has suggested a developmental functional hypothesis which explains that the mother tongue comprises three phases of development. They are:

Phase I, the child's initial functional-linguistic system;

Phase II, the transition from the system to that of the adult language;

Phase III, the learning of the adult language.

In the first phase, the child masters certain basic functions of language: instrumental, regulatory, interactional, personal, heuristic, imaginative and informative (see Halliday p. 229). The implication of this theory is that the functions of language represent universals of human culture which may in turn have further implications for an understanding of the evolution of language. He says that language serves a wide range of human needs and the richness and variety of its functions is reflected in the nature of language itself, in its organization as a system: within the grammatical structure of language, certain areas are primarily associated with the personal and interactional functions. Different bits of the system, as it were, do different jobs and this in turn helps us to interpret and make more precise the notion of uses of language. What is common to every use of language is that it is meaningful, contextualized and in the broadest sense, social (p.65).

**e. Both L1 and L2 learners make sense of the world through meaningful operations.**

This view explains that most items of language are acquired by meaningful learning by anchoring and relating new items and experiences to knowledge that exists in the cognitive framework (Ausubel in Brown 1980).

Bruner (1983) points out that it is through established routines of carrying on conversations about "here and now" events that children are helped to recognize how talk relates to what is seen and touched and how linguistic structures are used to discriminate variations in meaning. It is important to point out that

a L2 learner in a non-bilingual setting, which is the Colombian case, has normally formed his basic concepts about the world so that there cannot be the same link: language development and cognitive development. However, the link between language and concepts remains of major importance since the second language will sometimes require the learner to develop an awareness for new concepts and distinctions (Littlewood p.14).

## 2. THE LINGUISTIC DOMAIN

### a. Both L1 and L2 have to do with the acquisition of a complex system.

As discussed previously, children seem to look initially for a system (a) which is rule-governed in a consistent way, (b) in which the clues for meaning are clearly displayed, and (c) where each item or distinction has a definite function in communicating meaning. This search for operating principles is relevant for second as well as for first language learning. Studies of error analysis give evidence of the existence of this system (e.g. overgeneralization of rules, simplification, and communication strategies) (see previous section on strategies).

On the other hand, according to the mentalistic view (Chomsky, 1957), language is not a matter of "habit formation" but underlying it, there is a complex system of rules which enables the speakers to create and understand an infinite number of sentences, most of which they have never encountered before. This creativity is possible because we have internalized the underlying system of rules. The knowledge of these rules is our "linguistic competence" which is different from the "performance" that we can actually observe. The operation of rules leads to establish relationships which cannot be learned by imitation but by mental processing. Chomsky posits a LAD (Language Acquisition Device) to explain this innate capacity for acquiring language. However, this view has been criticized and the "specific capacity" for language alone has been questioned. Opponents to the Chomskian view claim that language acquisition can be explained in terms of the same cognitive capacity used by children in making sense of other aspects of their world. For example, their ability to discover the relationship between subject and object in grammar may originate in their more general ability to perceive the world in terms of the agents and objects of actions (Littlewood 1984).

Again, research on error analysis, morpheme analysis, route of L1 and L2 acquisition, have given evidence of children's developing a grammatical system which is an approximation to that of the community.

To conclude, research on learning two languages either simultaneously or later in life confirms that the linguistic and cognitive processes of second language learning are in general similar to first language processes (Raven, 1968; Milton 1974; Natalicio & Natalicio, 1971; Dulay & Burt, 1974a; Ervin-Trip, 1974; and Hansen-Bede, 1975 in Littlewood p.56). However, adult second language linguistic processes are more difficult to pin down. Most of the work done is shaped by classroom variables such as textbooks, methods, etc. So it makes it difficult to conclude much about the natural process.

## 3. THE AFFECTIVE DOMAIN

Studies on the affective domain start from the assumption that humans are emotional creatures and are influenced not only by intellectual operations but emotions. Research on L1 acquisitions in children has focused on requirements for developing language. Bruner (1983) proposed a LASS (Language Acquisition Support System) which provides support or "scaffolds" children in their progression to mastering the language. This support is provided by parents and caretakers, and studies on children and mother interaction has shown that parents use facial expressions, gestures, action, tone of voice intuitively to support the meaning of what they say. On the other hand, research on L2 acquisition has focused on other developmental factors:

### a. The role of egocentricity

Guiora et al. (1972b) in Brown, (1980) has suggested that the acquisition of a "language ego" may account for the difficulties that adults have in learning a second language. The role of inhibitions in grown children in the search of self-identity has also influenced the teaching of second languages. Other factors include: empathy, self-esteem, extroversion, imitation, anxiety, attitudes, etc. I will refer to the most important ones:

### b. The role of attitudes

Research has shown that negative attitudes can affect success in learning a language. Very young children are not affected by attitudes towards types and stereotypes of people. Negative attitudes and peer pressure are variables that affect the success or failure in learning a second language.

### c. The role of transactional factors

Transactional factors account for the need of human beings to maintain bonds with society. A variety of transactional variables comes to bear on first and second language learning: imitation, modeling, identification, empathy, extroversion, aggression, styles

of communication and others. For example, empathy is usually described as the projection of one's own personality on another in order to understand him better. Communication requires a degree of empathy so that we transcend our ego boundaries to send and receive messages. In a second language learning situation the problem of empathy becomes acute because the learner-speaker must currently identify cognitive and affective sets in the hearer but he must do so in a language in which he is insecure.

**d. The role of motivation**

A lot of research has focused on the role of motivation not only in education in general but in second language acquisition. Any success or failure in language learning depends on the learner's degree of motivation. Many factors that account for motivation have been analyzed. They are need for exploration, for manipulation, for activity, for stimulation, for knowledge, for ego enhancement, for security, for self-actualization, for autonomy, etc. (see Brown, 1980).

**B. DIFFERENCES**

Most of the important issues on both L1 and L2 acquisition have been discussed in the previous section. To what extent could we draw a border line to specify similarities and differences? I have tried to group similarities taking into account Brown's categories: cognitive, linguistic, affective and physical domains. However, on dealing with them I found differences which could have been grouped into this section but they were mainly related to certain degrees of similarities on the focus but not on the outcomes of research. To accomplish the purpose of this section, I will summarize the most "outstanding" differences.

**1. DIFFERENCES ON TYPES OF COMPARISON**

As Brown (1980) points out, when comparing L1 and L2, we have to take into account many variables that make the comparison different. For example, we have to consider differences between children and adults. This involves comparing L1 and L2 learning situations but also the difference between children and adults. He illustrates the types of comparison by using a matrix grid:

	<b>Child</b>	<b>Adult</b>	
L1	C1	A1	
L2	C2	A2	

- L1 = First language
- L2 = Second language
- C = Child
- A = Adult

The resulting types of comparison could be: C1 - A2 (first and second language acquisition in children and adults, holding second language constant), C1 - A2 (first language acquisition in children and second language acquisition in adults).

If we take C1 - C2 type, holding age constant, we are manipulating the language variable. However, a three-year-old is different from a nine-year-old even though both are children and have cognitive affective and physical differences, thus making the comparison "relative". If we take C1 - A2 type, we will find that such a comparison is very difficult because of the enormous cognitive, affective and physical differences between children and adults.

**2. THE STARTING POINT OF L2 LEARNING (PHYSICAL DOMAIN)**

L2 learners may start their learning either at the same or different level of cognitive development which makes the comparison different. For example, it has been claimed that young learners acquire a second language more easily than adults, due to a "critical period" beyond which language is increasingly difficult to acquire. Scholars have enquired in the nature of neurological development and have attributed language functioning to a lateralization process which is completed around puberty (Lennenberg, 1967 in Brown, op.cit.). Some have suggested that the plasticity of the brain prior to puberty enables the child to acquire not only his first language but also a second language. This may account for the difficulty for an adult to acquire fluent control of a second language. Krashen (1973) argued that this process was completed around age 5 and accounts for the inability of persons to acquire fluent, authentic pronunciation of a second language. However, there is evidence that some adults after the age of puberty have acquired authentic control of a second language (Hull, 1970 in Brown, 1980).

The role of "coordination of speech muscles" is another factor relating to age. According to this view, children may have a physical advantage in phonemic control of a second language because of their muscular plasticity at an early age. Research on acquisition of authentic control of the phonology of a foreign language supports the notion of a critical period. The evidence

thus far indicates that persons the age of puberty do not generally acquire authentic pronunciation of a second language. Some exceptions to this rule are cited of adults who after puberty, learned a second language fluently and even exceed a better control than native speakers. Thus, muscular coordination may be of minimal significance in establishing criteria for overall successful acquisition of a second language. The acquisition of the communicative and functional purposes of language, according to Brown, is far more significant. "Thus the cause of children's superiority may not be in the age of the person, but in the context of learning."

### 3. THE ROUTES OF DEVELOPMENT

As it was previously discussed, it has been said that learners follow a universal route or that they move in an interlanguage continuum. However, research has shown that the routes are not parallel. L2 learners may use L1 route as a reference that may facilitate L2 acquisition. Here, we can refer back to Corder who points out that adults, more cognitively secure, appear to operate from the solid foundation of the first language and may make errors not different from the ones children make but which are the result of creative perception of the second language and an attempt to discover its rules apart from the rules of first language.

### 4. DIFFERENCES IN THE CONTEXT OR SETTING OF ACQUISITION

First language learners acquire their language in a natural environment supported and oriented towards the resolution of immediate problems of communication and primary needs (here and now). This environment is to some extent, less stressing than that of the adults. On the other hand, if we think about variables such as a non-bilingual or foreign context, the L2 will be acquired in an artificial situation and the teaching learning process will be the result of manipulation on the part of the teacher or input providers.

### 5. THE ROLE OF INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES

This is an important factor that accounts for differences in language acquisition due to the great amount of variables such as cognitive, personality, physical or learning styles previously discussed.

## II. PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

Based on the former discussion, we can draw some of the many pedagogical implications which have been suggested by researchers in L1 and L2 acquisition.

They are as follows:

1. Teachers should provide classroom conditions for L2 learning. Teachers should know that second language learners come to the classroom with different levels of cognitive development as well as a great deal of individual differences, attitudes and expectations. They have to make use of their psycholinguistic and pedagogic knowledge and experience to facilitate their students success on learning a new language. To do so, the teacher should provide appropriate classroom conditions to help their learners in their very complex task of acquiring another language.
2. Activities should focus on language as interaction. Krashen says that the condition which is necessary in order to acquire a language is meaningful interaction in the target language in which the speakers are concerned not with the form of what they say, but rather with the message that is being conveyed (Young, 1983).
3. Teachers should create conditions in which meaning is negotiated through interaction. Learner-centred activities such as problem-solving tasks, games, role-plays have been suggested to help learners to rehearse language in concrete situations to solve problems.
4. Teachers should create an atmosphere where students are not embarrassed by their making errors. Dulay et al. (1982) say that correction of grammatical errors does not help students avoid them. They suggest not to focus on student's errors during communication, avoid showing impatience when they make them, and respond to the content of student speech, not to the language they use. Role play activities minimize students' feelings of personal failure when they make errors (p.268).
5. Teachers should promote subconscious learning activities. Receptive activities such as listening and reading also contribute to general language competence. For example, they enable us to introduce interesting and motivating materials relevant to the learners' own concerns and tasks should provide learners with a clear purpose.
6. Allow learners to pass through a "silent period" during which there is no pressure on them to speak the second language at all. During this period, the teacher exposes them to comprehensible input and expects them to respond either non-verbally or in the mother tongue. Students are encouraged to speak when they are ready to do so spontaneously

on the basis of their own created system.

7. Teachers should be aware of the learner's internal syllabus. Most of the times, teachers may be in conflict when they plan a syllabus based either on a prescriptive external syllabus which is sequenced following a predetermined order of items or the learner's internal syllabus. Littlewood suggests two possible responses to knowledge about natural sequences: when possible, make the teaching sequence reflect the learning sequence so that they reinforce each other instead of conflicting; when this is not possible, predict a higher proportion of errors which we can either simply accept as inevitable stages, or attempt to eliminate by extra-teaching. A third possible response is to abandon the idea of exact structural sequencing so that the learner's in-built syllabus can follow its own preferred path in processing the language.

8. Teachers should be sensitive to psychological factors that affect students' learning. Research and experience have shown that success in learning will depend not only on motivation and aptitude but on other psychological factors. According to Littlewood, the time we can assess a student's personality or cognitive style and assign him to a suitable teacher or method on the basis of this assessment has not come yet. In the meantime, we must be content with conclusions of a more general nature. For example:

- Language learning is a natural response to communicative needs (productive and/or receptive). Therefore, we should try to ensure that learners are always aware of the communicative value of what they are learning. For example, learners should be helped to use the language for expressing their own personal needs and their own personality.
- In most situations, learning occurs more easily if there are positive attitudes towards the second language community. This can be done by using suitable teaching materials and personal contact with native speakers.
- In the classroom, anxiety can hinder learning and make learners reluctant to express themselves through the second language. We should therefore avoid becoming overcritical of their performance, try to create space for each learner's individuality to express itself, and work to produce a relaxed classroom atmosphere

with cooperative relationships.

- Successful learners often adopt certain identifiable learning strategies or mouthing the answers to questions posed to other learners. We can encourage all learners to adopt such strategies.

### III. CONCLUSIONS

From the previous discussion about comparing L1 and L2 acquisition and its pedagogical implications, we can draw the following general conclusions:

1. Research on L1 and L2 acquisition has been extensive and fruitful but much of its findings have not rendered straightforward answers for teachers interested in relating theory to practice for various reasons:
  - a. Research on human behavior has always been very complex and different methods have been applied to their studies based on humanistic approaches. Researchers have tested and generated hypotheses about language acquisition and have used either empirical or scientific principles of investigation.
  - b. Criteria to construct research framework to compare L1 and L2 have also been very complex to establish because of the numerous variables involved in both L1 and L2 development.
2. Research on both L1 and L2 acquisition has tended to look for similarities and differences in order to get insights not only for a better understanding of language acquisition but pedagogical purposes. I grouped similarities and differences trying to follow Brown's framework.

In the cognitive domain, some of the similarities are: Both L1 and L2 are the result of human cognitive development, both use similar cognitive mechanisms or strategies to make sense of the linguistic system itself, both follow a route of acquisition or have an internal syllabus in their development; both L1 and L2 learners make sense of reality in context.

In the linguistic domain, both L1 and L2 deal with the acquisition of a complex system of rules. In the affective domain, I highlighted the roles of egocentricity, attitude and transactional factors. I also pointed out that drawing a border line between similarities and differences was a very difficult task. However, I summarized the following main differences: the

different types of comparison described by Brown renders a great variety of comparisons such as C1 - A2, C1 - C2 or C2 - A2, and so on. I also emphasized the starting point of L2 learning due to differences in cognitive development, in age, etc. The routes of development may coincide at some point but in other aspects they deviate; there are differences in contexts and settings and individual differences also account for differences in L1 and L2 acquisition.

Some pedagogical implications which can be of significance for language teachers were discussed. They are summarized as follows:

1. Teachers should provide classroom conditions for language learners. For example, they should devise activities based on language as interaction in which meaning is negotiated. Tasks should be purposeful, the correction of errors is not so important and receptive activities such as reading and listening also contribute to language competence.
2. Teachers should be aware and sensitive to the learner's internal syllabus and to psychological factors that can affect students' learning.
3. Success on learning will depend on motivation, attitudes towards the foreign language, avoidance of anxiety, and opportunities for students to monitor and rehearse language.

Regarding the state of the art in language acquisition research, Mc Laughlin (1987) says that "... there are still too many gaps in our knowledge especially of individual difference variables and social factors that play important roles in classroom practice. This is not to deny the potential relevance of theory and research for second language teaching. Ultimately, teaching benefits by sound understanding of the processes involved in second language learning".

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