

Integrative Language Learning

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Abstract - A language learner has the choice of language elements such as sounds, spellings, grammatical patterns – which are significant for languages, dialects, styles, or other varieties of languages which together define a language. The regular choices made by an individual speaker is on the basis of patterns established in the speech community or communities of which they are members of. Aspects of language (Saussure 1931), is essentially a social phenomenon, dependent on the consensual behaviors and beliefs of individual members of a speech community. The aim is to ascertain the choices of individual speakers in terms of patterns related to Tenses through grammatical items, spellings and different styles. A survey was conducted in Bolpur High School in Shantiniketan, West Bengal. Primary data was collected in the form of written essays in the three Tenses. Secondary data was collected from other websites.

Keywords - *Individual Speaker, Choices, Markers, Social Phenomenon, Communities, Language.*

1. Introduction

Good language learner (GLL) studies are a group of academic studies in the area of second language acquisition that deal with the strategies that good language learners exhibit. The rationale for the studies was that there is more benefit from studying the habits of successful language learners than there is from studying learners who fossilize at an early stage or stop studying altogether. It was thought that if the strategies of successful learners could be identified and understood then that knowledge could help learners achieve good results. Individual variation in second-language acquisition is a general term for studies in second-language acquisition that seek to address the question: *Why do some learners do better than others?*

Unlike child language acquisition, people learning a second language rarely reach the same level of competence as native speakers of that language. Some may stop studying a language before they have fully internalized it, and others may stop improving despite living in a country where a language is spoken for many years. It also appears that children are more likely than adults to reach native-like competence in a second

language. There have been many studies that have attempted to explain these phenomena.

In the 1970s, a series of studies labeled as “Good language learner studies” was used for identifying or to pinpoint the factors or elements of a successful language learner. In the present day research it is regarded as simplistic but at that time it had served the purpose of underlining a number of elements affecting language acquisition.

Research on many of these specific factors continues today in more details. Therefore, as a result, *individual variation in second-language acquisition* cannot be considered a single area of research. The studies is carried out keeping the different factors like language aptitude, age and language learning, strategy use, and affective factors that affect language acquisition as separate entities.

2. Relevance of Factors Influencing Language Acquisition

2.1 Significance of an Individuals’ Age on SLA

Confirming the relevance of age factor for language learning has long been under study. But according to the Critical period theory popularised by Eric Lenneberg in 1967, children adopt L2 much quickly than adults. (SLA) second language acquisition theories point towards a possible presence CP for SLA. Learning processes and casual factors may explain the distinctive learning routes and their impact on the language learning aptitude of both children and adults. In some cases, that is in pre pubescent children, language acquisition is easy whereas some expound that older learners have the advantage. However consistent research has established that SLA may be affected by age.

2.2 Learning Strategies and Communicative strategies

Use of strategies has been shown to be critical to successful language learning, so much so that Canale and

Swain (1980) included "strategic competence" among the four components of communicative competence. Research here has also shown significant pedagogical effects. This has given rise to "strategies-based instruction." Strategies are commonly divided into learning strategies and communicative strategies, although there are other ways of categorizing them. Learning strategies are techniques used to improve learning, such as mnemonics or using a dictionary. Learners (and native speakers) use communicative strategies to get meaning across even when they lack access to the correct language: for example, by using words like "thing", or means such as mime. Communicative strategies may not have any direct bearing on learning, and some strategies such as avoidance (not using a form with which one is uncomfortable) may actually hinder learning.

Learners from different cultures use strategies in different ways, as a research tradition led by Rebecca Oxford has demonstrated. Related to this, are differences in strategy use between male and female learners. Numerous studies have shown that female learners typically use strategies more widely and intensively than males; this may be related to the statistical advantage which female learners enjoy in language learning.

2.3 Influence of Emotional State and Attitude

Affective factors relate to the learner's emotional state and attitude toward the target language. (Bloom's taxonomy) which describes the affective levels of receiving, responding, valuing, organization, and self-characterization through one's value system.

2.4 Filters That Impede Language Acquisition

Affective filters like shyness, concern, grammar or other related factors are high filters which transcends into ineffective learning by the student learning a second language. Students with a lower affective filter will be more likely to engage in learning because they are less likely to be impeded by other factors. The affective filter is an important component of second-language learning.

2.5 The Stress Factor

Although a low level of anxiety may be helpful, studies have almost unanimously shown that anxiety damages students' prospects for successful learning. Anxiety is often related to a sense of threat to the learner's self-concept in the learning situation, for example if a learner fears being ridiculed for a mistake. This may result in a loss of confidence.

2.6 Personality Traits

Extroverts or outgoing people are more likely to pick up a second language than an introvert or a shy person. A study done by Naiman reflected this point. The subjects were 72 Canadian high school students from grades 8, 10 and 12 who were studying French as a second language. Naiman gave them all questionnaires to establish their psychological profiles, which also included a French listening test and imitation test. He found that approximately 70% of the students with the higher grades (B or higher) would consider themselves extroverts. Kin ginger and Farrell (2003) conducted interviews with U.S. students after their study abroad program in France They found that some avoided interaction or communication and were typically quiet, reserved people or introverts. Extroverts normally try to communicate as they don't feel under any pressure.

2.7 Impact of Societal Dynamics and Others

Attitudes of the communities, parents, group dynamics, facilities and exposer of the target language have a major role in motivating and strengthening the impact on second language acquisition.

2.8 The Formulating Stages

Researchers have carried out numerous studies to understand the nature of first and second language acquisition. These studies have revealed that both first and second language learners follow a pattern of development, which is mainly followed despite exceptions. Rod Ellis (1984) outlines three developmental stages: the silent period, formulaic speech, and structural and semantic simplification.

Research in natural settings where unplanned language, such as the learner language that results from attempts by learners to express meaning more or less spontaneously, is used to show that both first and second language learners pass through a similar initial stage, *the silent period*. Children acquiring their first language go through a period of listening to the language they are exposed to. During this period the child tries to discover what language is. In the case of second language acquisition, learners opt for a silent period when immediate production is not required from them. In general, however, many second language learners - especially classroom learners- are urged to speak. The fact that there is a silent period in both first and second language learners (when given the opportunity) is widely accepted. However, there is a disagreement on what contribution the silent period has in second language acquisition. While Krashen (1982) argues that it builds competence in the learner via listening, Gibbons (1985,

cited in Ellis, 1994) argues that it is a stage of incomprehension.

The second developmental stage is termed *formulaic speech*. Formulaic speech is defined as expressions which are learnt as unanalysable wholes and employed on particular occasions (Lyons, 1968, cited in Ellis, 1994). Krashen (1982) suggests that these expressions can have the form of routines (whole utterances learned as memorized chunks –(e.g. I don't know.), patterns (partially unanalyzed utterances with one or more slots - e.g. Can I have a ____?), and Ellis (1994) suggests that these expressions can consist of entire scripts such as greetings. The literature points out that formulaic speech is not only present in both first and second language acquisition but also present in the speech of adult native speakers.

In the third stage the first and second language learners apply *structural and semantic simplifications* to their language. Structural simplifications take the form of omitting grammatical functors (e.g. articles, auxiliary verbs) and semantic simplifications take the form of omitting content words (e. g. nouns, verbs). There are two suggested reasons why such simplifications occur. The first reason is that learners may not have yet acquired the necessary linguistic forms. The second reason is that they are unable to access linguistic forms during production.

These three stages show us that L1 and L2 learners go through similar stages of development with the exception that L2 learners are urged to skip the silent period. However, learners do not only show a pattern in developmental sequences, but also in the order in which they acquire certain grammatical morphemes.

2.9 Linguistic Universals

There are two approaches to linguistic universals. The first approach was put forward by Greenberg (1966, in Ellis 1994) and termed *typological universals*. Typological universals are based on cross-linguistic comparisons on a wide range of languages drawn from different language families to discover which features they have in common (e.g. all languages have nouns, verbs etc.). The second approach is the *generative school* represented by Chomsky. The aim is to study individual languages in great depth in order to identify the principles of grammar which underlie and govern specific rules. This approach was later termed as Universal Grammar (Ellis, 1994). The most relevant aspect of both approaches that relates to L1 and L2 acquisition is that some features in a language are marked and some are unmarked. According to typological universals, unmarked features are those that are universal or present in most languages and which the learners tend

to transfer. Marked rules are language specific features which the learner resists transferring. According to Universal Grammar, core rules, such as word order, are innate and can be arrived at through the application of general, abstract principles of language structure. Peripheral rules are rules that are not governed by universal principles. Peripheral elements are those that are derived from the history of the language, that have been borrowed from other languages, or that have arisen accidentally. These elements are marked. Peripheral aspects are more difficult to learn (Ellis, 1994; McLaughlin, 1987).

Even though neither of these approaches aimed at explaining first or second language acquisition, the results of both are applicable. The findings show that unmarked features are learned earlier and easier than marked rules in both the first and the second language while unmarked forms require more time and effort by the learner.

2.10 Behavioral Stimulus

The similarity between L1 and L2 acquisition is seen in the Behavioristic Approach originally which tries to explain learning in general. The famous psychologist Pavlov tried to explain learning in terms of conditioning and habit formation. Following Pavlov, B. F. Skinner tried to explain language learning in terms of *operant conditioning*. This view sees language as a behavior to be taught. A small part of the foreign language acts as a *stimulus* to which the learner *responds* (e.g. by repetition). When the learner is 100 % successful, the teacher *reinforces* by praise or approval. Consequently, the likelihood of the behavior is increased. However, if the learner responds inappropriately then the behavior is punished and the likelihood of this behavior to occur is decreased (Brown, 1994). In other words, children imitate a piece of language they hear and if they receive positive reinforcement they continue to imitate and practice that piece of language which then turns into a 'habit' (Williams & Burden, 1997). Similarly, basing on the Behaviorist Approach it is assumed that a person learning a second language starts off with the habits associated with the first language. These habits interfere with those needed for second language speech and new habits of language are formed. Errors produced by the second language learner are seen as first language habits interfering with second language habits. This approach advises the immediate treatment of learner errors (Lightbown & Spada 2006). Some regular and routine aspects of language might be learned through stimulus/response but this does not seem to account for the more grammatical structures of the language. The Behavioristic Approach holds that language acquisition is environmentally determined, that the environment provides the language learner with language,

which acts as a stimulus, to which the language learner responds. However, L1 and L2 learners form and repeat sentences they have not heard of before. Therefore, this approach fails to account for the creative language use of L1 and L2 learners.

2.11 The Language Classroom

The target language is taught as a subject only and is not commonly used as a medium of communication outside the classroom. The difference of the contexts of first and second language acquisition play an important role in the acquisition process. While it is possible to learn a second language in various contexts, first language acquisition takes place only in a natural context and in the social group the child is growing up and where the child gets L1 input, only. The different contexts for second language acquisition can also lead to variations in second language proficiency due to affective factors.

Conclusion

The learner's knowledge of the second language and to the actual speech of L2 is a collection of sentences as well as a sense of knowledge of the desired language garnered over a period of time.

3. Research Methodology

A sample survey was conducted in Bolpur High School Shantiniketan using quantitative method from a size of seven respondents from Shantiniketan, Birbhum, West Bengal, India. Out of which five respondents were studied minutely. They were given essay writing in three tenses. Primary data was collected in the form of written essays. Secondary data was collected from other websites.

3.1 Method of Analysis

All the respondents were asked to write essays in Past tense, Present Tense and Future tense. Word limit was 100 words maximum.

3.2 Error Analysis

To check the correctness in their essays by Bengali EFL students. To check the correctness of the tenses (correct form of the words) by checking the Verbs.

3.3 Problems

Factors taken into consideration-As far as possible care was taken that the sample group should have similar features.

- a. Age factor –between 16- 18 years of age
- b. All the respondents are 12th standard students

- c. All of them have an urban background

4. Data Analysis, Tables and Figures

4.1 To Check the Correctness of the Tenses (Correct Form of the Words)

I) Errors in verbs by individual Bengali EFL respondents

Errors in verbs

Table 1

Candidate no.	one
Past Tense	0
Present Tense	1
Future Tense	2

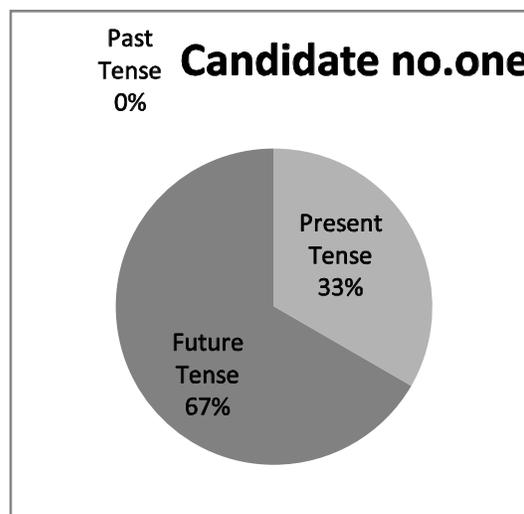


Fig 1

Findings-Candidate No. One has displayed proficiency in use of verbs in Past Tense. Whereas maximum error of verb is observed in Future Tense.

Errors in verbs

Table 2

Candidate no.	Two
Past Tense	2
Present Tense	0
Future Tense	0

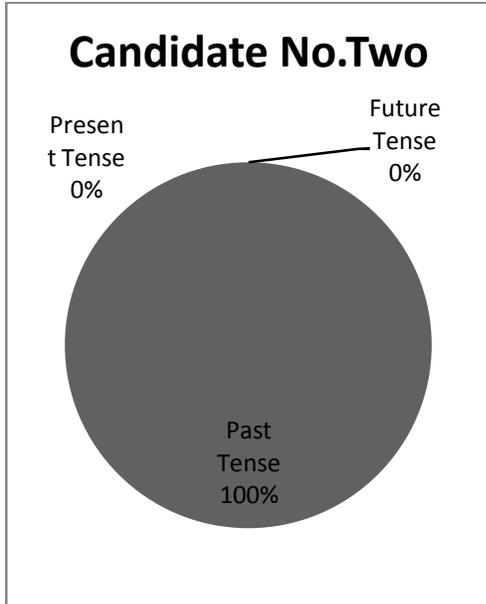


Fig 2

Findings-Candidate No. Two has displayed proficiency in use of verbs in Present and Future Tense. Whereas has displayed a weakness in the usage of verbs in Past Tense.

Errors in verbs

Table 3

Candidate no.	Three
Past Tense	1
Present Tense	0
Future Tense	1

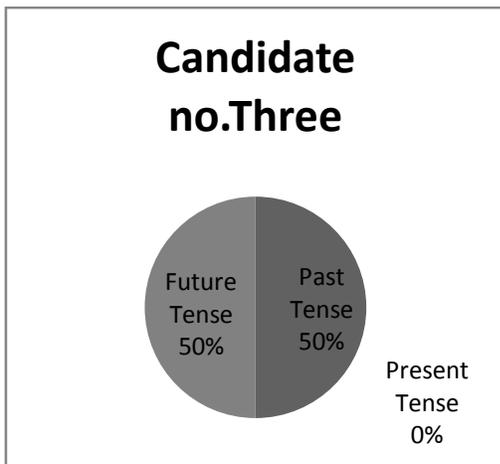


Fig 3

Findings-Candidate No. Three has displayed proficiency in use of verbs in Present Tense. Whereas has displayed

equal weakness in the usage of verbs in Past and Future Tense.

Errors in verbs

Table 4

Candidate no.	Four
Past Tense	2
Present Tense	0
Future Tense	0

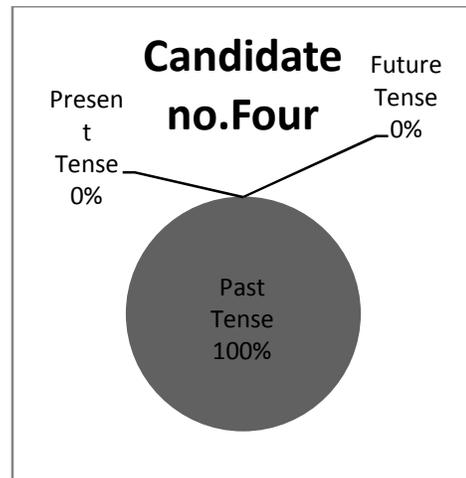


Fig 4

Findings

Candidate No. Four has displayed proficiency in use of verbs in Present Tense and Future Tense. Whereas has displayed weakness in the usage of verbs in the Past Tense.

Errors in verbs

Table 5

Candidate no.	Five
Past Tense	1
Present Tense	0
Future Tense	1

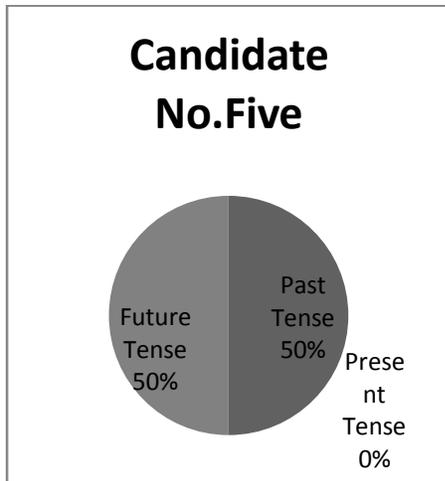


Fig 5

Findings-Candidate No. Five has displayed proficiency in use of verbs in Present Tense. Whereas has displayed equal weakness in the usage of verbs in the Past and Future Tense.

II. Given below are total errors in verbs made by the Bengali EFL respondents in the essays written in three different tenses.

Errors in verbs

Table 6

Candidate no.	one	two	three	four	five	Total
Past Tense	0	2	1	2	1	6
Present Tense	1	0	0	0	0	1
Future Tense	2	0	1	0	1	4

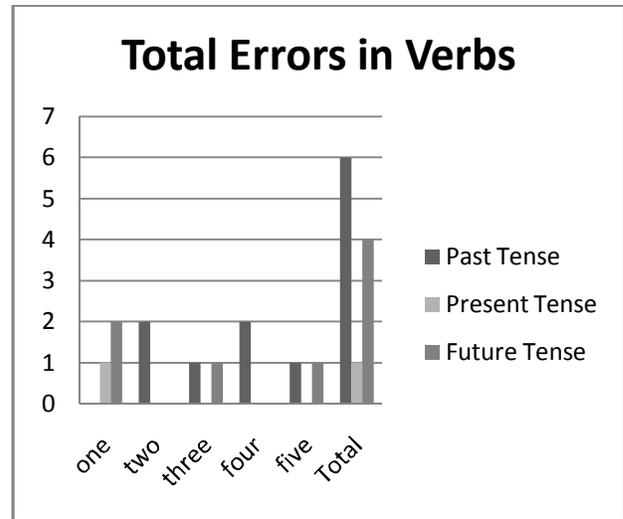


Fig 6

Findings

- The scores indicate that all the respondents made error of verbs.
- Least error is observed in the use of verbs in Present Tense.
- Maximum error is observed in the use of verbs in Past Tense.
- One respondent didn't make any error in Past tense.
- Two out of five respondents made error of verbs twice in Past Tense.
- Four respondents didn't make any error of verb in Present tense.
- Only one respondent made an error of verbs in the Present Tense.
- Candidate number two didn't make any error of verbs in Future Tense.
- One respondent made error of verbs twice in Future Tense.

4. Conclusion

The Bengali EFL students displayed ease of use of the correct form of the verbs in their essay writing in Present Tense. Maximum struggle in the use of verbs in the Past Tense, followed by future Tense. The acquisition of L2 by Bengali EFL students is hampered by the fact that the second language is taught as a subject matter rather than a communication mode. And language acquisition should be used more as a communication subject.

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