INDIVIDUAL CHARACTERITICS IN SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores the theoretical framework of the role individual characteristic in language acquisition. In other words, this paper specifies on promoting theoretical justifications of the role individual characteristics in second language acquisition. Language acquisition is very similar to the process children use in acquiring first and second languages. It requires meaningful interaction in the target language-natural communication in which speaker are concerned not with the form on their utterances but with the messages they are conveying and understanding those characteristics are age, gender, intelligence, aptitude, motivation and attitude, personality, learning styles and environment. The development those factors could be conducted via formal and informal language environment. Wherein, informal environment can be quite beneficial for adult second language acquisition. Formal environment are also beneficial.

KEY WORD: *Individual Characteristics, Formal and Informal Environment, Language Acquisition*

Kajian ini membahas mengenai kerangka teoritis peran karakteristik individu dalam pemerolehan bahasa. Dengan kata lain, kajian ini menekankan pada teori pembenaran mengenai peran karakteristik individu dalam pemerolehan bahasa kedua. Pemerolehan bahasa ini sangat mirip dengan proses pada saat anak menggunakan bahasa pertama dan bahasa kedua. Hal ini memerlukan interaksi yang bermakna dalam bahasa target-alam komunikasi yang fokus pembicaraan tidak lagi pada bentuk-bentuk ujaran but lebih pada makna atau pesan yang disampaikan dan memahami karakteristik tersebut seperti usia, jenis kelamin,

intelijen, bakat, motivasi dan sikap, kepribadian, gaya belajar dan lingkungan. Perkembangan faktor-faktor tersebut bisa dilakukan melalui lingkungan bahasa formal dan informal. Dimana, lingkungan informal bisa sangat bermanfaat untuk pemerolehan bahasa kedua oleh orang dewasa. Lingkungan yang formal juga bermanfaat

A. INTRODUCTION

Language is a tool for communication. Every human have ability to acquire the language. The first way acquires a language when the children develop their ability in first language. When get to acquire the language are usually not aware of the fact acquiring a language, but the result they are using language for communication. Language acquisition too give a result to get to acquire competence, is also subconscious. Generally, the children are not aware of the rules of the language have acquired. Even if, have feel correctness. Sometime grammatical sentence "sound" right or 'feel" right, and errors feel wrong. it is not consciously know what rules was violated.

Other ways of describing acquisition include implicit learning, informal learning, and natural learning. Acquisition came after the first language has been learnt. In non-technical language, acquisition is 'picking up" a language. Some second language theory has assumed that children acquire, while adults can only learn. The acquisition learning hypothesis claim, however, that adult also acquire. That the ability to "pick up' language does not disappear at puberty. The term 'critical period' is used to refer to the general phenomenon of declining competence over increasing age of exposure and is used to state that there is a period when language acquisition can take place naturally and effortlessly, but after a certain age the brain is no longer able to process language input in this way (Ellis, 1986, p. 107). The most frequently understood period referred to is reflected in Scovel's definition: In brief, the critical period hypothesis is the notion that language is best learned during the early years of childhood, and that after about the first dozen years of life, everyone faces certain constraints in the ability to pick up a new language (1988, p. 2).

In reference to the statement above, could be concluded that every human has an individual characteristics or personal characteristic that can contribute in the language acquisition. Those characteristics are age, gender, intelligence, aptitude, motivation and attitude, personality, learning styles and environment etc. With regard to it, this paper attempts to explore the theoretical framework of the role individual characteristic in language acquisition. In other words, this paper

specifies on promoting theoretical justifications of the role individual characteristics in second language acquisition.

B. INDIVIDUAL CHARACTERISTICS

Individual differences among second language learner are a prominent feature of SLA, because a great deal of the variation in language outcomes is attributable to various learner characteristics.

1. Age

The effect of age on learning a second language, commonly known as the critical period hypothesis (HPH), is perhaps one of the most controversial research topics in the area of second language (L2) acquisition. The concept of CPH is conceptualized by the general public as "earlier is the better" in L2 attainment and is so entrenched that it appears to have become a folk psychology theory (Becky, 2013).

The age variable examined in L2 studies is usually the age of first exposure to the target L2. in studied examining immigrant populations, this is typically indexed by the participants' age of arrival (AOA) in the host country. Previous country has suggested that AOA is apparently an important determinant of overall degree of foreign accent in the L2. (Flege, Munro, & MacKay, 1995a). as well as degree of accuracy in producing particular L2 consonants and vowels .(Flege, Munro, & MacKay, 1996). age effect have also been reported for learning of English morph syntax (Johnson & Newport, 1989). the observation of age effect on the L2 performance of adults-even those who are experienced in their L2 has suggested to some researchers that ability to acquire an L2 effectively is limited by a critical period.

In reference to the definitions above, could be summarized that the age effect on second language acquisition. Successful learners of a second language who started SLA after puberty and have been able to achieve native proficiency.

2. Gender

The concept of gender is brought into being when it is matter of performance by Butler (1990) in John's article.. Gender is therefore not something you acquire once and for at all stage of life, but an ongoing accomplishment

produced by your repeated actions (Cameron,2004). Language scholar has claimed that gender differences in communication mirror and reproduce broader political inequalities between the sexes (John, 1997:89).

A more moderate definition is proposed by Oktay Aslan, the scholar (especially postmodernist) believes that gender is a completely different concept from sex and it is not a biological fact at all (2009). Although the words gender and sex both have the sense 'the state of being male or female', they are typically used in slightly different ways; sex tends to refer to biological differences, while gender refers to culture or social ones. In line with Oxford Dictionaries, Language matter, 2014). Consequently social context, culture and principle of each society shape gender identity of people accompanied with unique individual experience.

Contrary with the current study, the term gender is used following this conceptualization of gender which is defined as culturally constructed male identity and female identity, not the biological differences between male and female.(Leyla, 2015). In language acquisition, parents may have followed stereotype that girls are more emotional than boys (Brody, 1985 in Ana Aznar, 2014:153). Girls may be socialized early into a socioemotional orientation emphasizing emotional expressivity making them more socially mature than boys. Indeed, parents may have responded differently to children at this age because of the greater proclivity that 3 to 4 year old girls show compared to boys in understanding display rules that affect emotional reactions.

Evidence of this proposed by Robin Lakoft an American Linguist, argued that woman's speech lacks authority because, in order to become "feminine", woman must learn to adopt an unassertive style of communication. That is, they must learn to denude their statement of declarative force (John, 1997:90).

In general that men's speech more frequently uses language reflecting a dominance hierarchy, such as use of quantitative terms and negative or judgmental adjectives. Women tend to use language that reflects a communal, non-confrontation environment, such that women's speech contains characteristics such as the use of hedge and emotional references (Karen, 20015:418).

Lackoff (1975) in Mohmoud's article, shows differences between the speech of male and female. He claims that women use more grammatical elements than men, and their use the lexical category is to somehow different from that of men.

Brown (1980) in Mohmoud's article studied the use of particles between men and women, and came to this conclusion that women use more particles when they communicate with their same gender. He shows the type of gender effects on choosing the type of particles.

Tennen (1995) in Mohmoud's article, believes male students have more participation in class discourse than female students; male students prefer to ask more questions that their female counterpart; they have more relationship with their teachers. Tennen claims that the cause of this participation in class discourses is that the society expect them to play this role in real life, so the male students are practicing the role which they should undertake in future.

Wardhaugh (2006) believes that the differences between male and female speeches are the result of the social differences between the male and female. He cites the tendency of both type of gender in choosing the topic of conversation is related to their gender interests. furthermo.re, he dismisses any vigorous remarks on comparison and contrast between men and women paying attention to context (Mohmoud, 2015:54).

3. Intelligence

The term 'intelligence' has traditionally been used to refer to performance on certain kinds of tests. These tests are often associated with success in school and a link between intelligence and second language learning has sometimes been reported. Over the years, some research has shown that IQ scores were a good means of predicting success in second language learning. However, as suggested above, IQ test may be more strongly related to Meta linguistic knowledge than to communicative ability. Indeed, many students whose general academic performance is weak experience considerable success in second language learning if they are given the right opportunity.

In recent years, many educators have been influenced by Howard Gardnes's (1991). Proposal that individuals have 'multiple intelligence' and that traditional IQ tests have assessed only a limited range of abilities. Among the multiple intelligences Gardner includes abilities in the areas of music, interpersonal relations, and athletics, as well as the verbal intelligence that is most often associated with success in school.

4. Aptitude

Specific abilities thought to predict success in language learning have been studied under the titles of language learning 'aptitude'. One of the pioneers in this area, John Carroll (1991), has characterized aptitude in term of the ability to learn quickly. Thus, we may hypothesize that a learner with high aptitude may learn with greater ease and speed but that other learners may also be successful if they persevere.

Over several decades, the most widely used aptitude test have been the Modern Language Aptitude (MLAT) (Carroll and Sapon 1959) and the Pimsleur Language Aptitude Battery (PLAB) (Pimsler 1996). Recently, Paul Meare (2005a) and his colleagues has developed test that are taken on computer. Peter Skehan (1989) argues that successful language learners may not be strong in all of the components of aptitude. For example, some individuals may have strong memories but only average abilities in language analysis. Learners' strengths and weakness in these different components may account for their ability to succeed in different types of instructional programs.

5. Motivation and Attitudes

Robert Gardner and his colleagues have carried out a program of research an the relationship between a learner's attitudes toward the second or foreign language learning language and its community, and success in second language learning. (Masgorat and Gardner 2003). As suggested above, it is difficult to know whether positive attitudes produce successful learning engenders positive attitudes, or whether both are affected by others factors. Although the research cannot prove that positive attitudes and motivation cause success in learning, there is ample evidence that positive motivation is associated with a willingness to keep learning.

Motivation in second language learning is a complex phenomenon. It has been defined in terms of two factors: on the one hand, learners' communicative needs, and on the other, their attitudes towards the second language community. Instrumental motivational (language learning for more immediate or practical goals) and integrative motivation (language learning for personal growth and cultural enrichment).

Next definition from Zoltan Dornyei (2001a) developed a process-oriented model of motivation that consist of three phase. the first phase; 'choice motivation" refers to getting started and to setting goals, the second; "executive motivation", is about carrying out the necessary task to maintain motivation, and the third phase; "motivation retrospection", refers to students' appraisal of and reaction to their performance.

Social factors at a more general level can affect motivation, attitudes, and language learning success. one such factor is social dynamic or power relationship between the language. Children as well as adults are sensitive to social dynamic and power relationship. L2 classroom evidence attests to the fact that motivation is a key factor in successfully learning a language (Brown, 2001).

In line with Bardovi-Harlig Dornyei's (1998) seminal study showed the advantage of the ESL over the EFL environment in attaining pragmatic ability, particularly in terms of the motivation that positive experiences in the TL community gave to the ESL learners.

6. Learning Styles

The term 'learning style' has been used to describes an individual' natural. Habitual and preferred way of absorbing, processing, and retaining new information and skill (Reid, 1995). For others, referred to as 'kinesthetic' learner, physical action such as miming and role-play learning style. Seem to help learning process. These are referred to as perceptually-based learning style. Considerable research has also focused on distinction between different cognitive learning styles. Individuals have been described as Field Independent or Field Dependent. For example of years, it was widely that there was strong relationship between field independence and success in second language learning.

Instead, we should encourage learners to use all means available to them. At a minimum, research on learning style should make us skeptical of claims that a single teaching method or textbook will suit the need of all learners. The challenge is to find instructional approaches that meet the needs of learners with a variety of aptitude and learning style profiles. Such exceptional learners suggest that an aptitude for language learning is at least partly independent of cognitive, social, and personality characteristic that are often associated with successful learning.

7. Personality

A number of personality characteristics have been proposed as likely to affect second language learning, but it is not been easy to demonstrate their effects in empirical studies. As with other research investigating the effect of individual characteristic on second language learning, deferent studies measuring a similar personality trait produce different results. For example, it is often argued that an extroverted person is well suited to language learning.

Another aspect of personality that has been studied is inhabitation. it has been suggested that inhabitation discourage risk-taking, which is necessary for progress in language learning. This is often considered to be particular problem for adolescents, who are more self-conscious than younger learners. While result such as these is interesting, they have note to do with performance than with learning. We may also note, in passing, that when larger doses of alcohol were administered, pronunciation rapidly deteriorated.

Learner anxiety-feelings of worry, nervousness, and stress that many students experience when learning a second language has been extensively investigated. for a long time, researcher thought of anxiety as a permanent feature of a learner's personality. In fact, the majority of language anxiety scales, like the foreign language Classroom Anxiety Schale (Horwitz, and Cope 1986) measure anxiety in this way.

More recent research investigating learning anxiety is more likely to be dynamic and dependent on particular situations and circumstances. This permits distinction to be made between for example, a student who feels anxious when

giving an oral presentation in front of the whole class but not when interacting with peers in group-work.

Experience anxiety before a test or an oral presentation can provide the right combination of motivation and focus to success on it. Because anxiety is often considered to be a negative term, some researcher has chosen to use other terms they consider to be more neutral. According to some researcher, learners who willingly communicate in a wide range of conversational interactions are able to do so because 'their prior language learning has led to development of self-confidence, which is based on the lack of anxiety combine with a sufficient level of communicative competence, arising from a series of reasonably pleasant (second language) experiences' (Maclntyre, clement, Dörney, and noels, 1998:548).

8. Environment

Two sorts of linguistics environments are constructed: artificial. or formal environments, found for the most part in the classroom, and natural or informal environment. Formal instructions (e.g. deductive presentation of rules) are not common to all teaching methods and, while their presence may sometimes be catalytic, are not necessary for learning to take place. Krashen and Seliger also noted that these features (rule isolation and feedback) do not seem to be present in informal environments.

Several studies, which will be considered in some detail below, suggest that adults can not only increase their second language proficiency in informal environments, but may do as well as or better than learners who have spent a comparable amount of time in formal situations.

Contribution of formal and informal environment, it is not simply the case that informal environments provide the necessary input for acquisition while the classroom aids increasing learned competence. The reinterpretation of the Krashen at all, series as well as the Friedlander at all. data described above suggests, first of all that informal environment must be intensive and involve the learner directly in order to be affective. Second, it seems plausible that classroom can accomplish both learning and acquisition simultaneously. in other words, the

classroom may serve an "intake" informal environment as well as a formal linguistic environment.

In particular, do levels of pragmatic ability differ between L2 and FL learner? to date, most studies have shown greater pragmatic awareness among L2 student than FL student (e.g,. Bardovi-Harlig & Dornyei, 1998; Schuer, 2006; Tagashira, yamato, & Isoda, @011), thus indicating that the TL environment has a positive influence on the appropriate use of sociopragmatic. L2 learners invariably receive more pragmatic input in their daily lives if they are motivated to interact with the TL community and have positive social interactions.

In additional, question about language use in context naturally arise in a safe L2 classroom environment when student bring in their outside experiences, for example, and ask why something happened to them in a particular way when communicating with an NS, or if a TL community and have positive social interaction. in the TL environment with exposure to authentic input would better help pragmatic ability develop in L2 learners than in their FL peers(e.g., Niezgoda & Rover, 2011; Taguchi, 2008). (Lauren, 2015). Others evidence proposed by Susan Levine from her new study that growth in syntax as well as growth in vocabulary are influenced greatly by environmental factors and the critical input may consist of such activities that are more likely to occur at school than at home (Levine, 2007:1).

C. SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

A second language learner is different from a very young child acquiring a first language. Children often exhibit non-adult-like interpretation of a given linguistic expression. in such case, there are two possibilities: 1). children have not yet acquired the linguistic knowledge that is required to implement the full, adult-like representation of the given expression; 2). children do possess the linguistic knowledge required for the full representation of the given expression, but are not yet able to successfully utilize it, incorporating all the necessary information into the actual processing/computation of the meaning. (Utako, 2015:288)

A more definition I proposed by Harley second language acquisition happen when a child and adult has already become competence at a language and then attempt to learn another. There are a number of reasons why a person makes find this difficult. First, we can saw that some aspects of language learning particularly, involving syntax, are more difficult outside the critical period. Second, older children and adult often have less time and motivation to learn second language. Third, there will of course be similarities and differences between the first (L1) (Harley, 2001:146).

In line with definition above, Steinberg argue when the child learns a first language, we may said that the child learn the language under natural conditions. Such a learning situation generally differs greatly from artificial once, with the most common one used in second language learning being the school classroom. Not all second language can be learned under natural condition, for example, children who are taking to live in foreign country may learn a second language without formal instruction by associating with speaker of the foreign language playmate, and household personal. Thus, a second language can be learned under either natural or planned condition (1982:166).

A comprehensive definition from Krashen who stated that language acquisition is very similar to the process children use in acquiring first and second languages. It requires meaningful interactions in the target language-natural communication in which speaker are concerned not with the form on their utterances but with the messages they are conveying and understanding (1981:1).

The assume that children are better than adults only in certain areas of SLA: at acquiring accent and basic interpersonal communication skills. The strong version of this hypothesis states that an authentic accent is not available unless SLA begins before the critical age (the 'Joseph Conrad phenomenon'). The practical question raised against this strong version is whether there are exceptions that contradict the case. Scovel (1988, p. 176) in Lang's article, admits that the existence of even a few exceptional adults who can pass as native speakers of a language which they have acquired after their adolescence challenges the strong version of the critical period hypothesis.

Two projects aimed to challenge the strong version of the critical period hypothesis by identifying successful learners of a second language who started SLA after puberty and have been able to achieve native proficiency (Nikolov, 1994, 1995, 2000a; Bongaerts et al., 1997) in Lang's article. The earlier one was conducted in Hungary and it consisted of two studies. In the first study, out of 20 adult speakers of Hungarian with various first languages, who started learning the target language after puberty, two were generally, and four were often mistaken for native speakers in a listening task by three groups of Hungarian judges. In the second study involving 13 Hungarian speakers of English one was generally, and four others were mistaken for a native speaker by half of the native judges.

The other project also involved two studies; they both examined highly successful Dutch learners of English. Similarly to the previous project, native judges were used. In the first study 22, and in the second 33 adults were involved. In both studies native judges were typically unable to tell native speakers of English from Dutch speakers of English. The findings of these two projects and another study investigating two successful learners of Egyptian Arabic (Ioup et al., 1994) have rovided further evidence against the strong version of the critical period hypothesis.

As far as the original hypothesis is concerned, according to which young learners are better in certain areas of SLA, Singleton (1989) in Lang's article, reexamines the studies that indicated greater success for younger learners on phonetic/phonological performance and points out that even in studies which seem to indicate that younger learners acquire native accent the evidence is for a trend rather than for a rule. As for the acquisition of basic interpersonal communication skills, he concludes that a large number of studies are not very obviously supportive of the notion that younger learners acquire BICS more readily than older learners. In reference to the claim according to which young children are generally better at acquiring BICS than CALP, Singleton's conclusion contrasts younger learners with adults and not child acquisition of the two types of skills. To sum up the findings concerning the third position, the evidence does not consistently support the hypothesis that younger learners are

inevitably more efficient than older learners in the phonetic/phonological domain. (Lang, 2002: 17 – 63).

D. CONCLUSION

In reference to the discussion, it is evident that individual characteristics are great factors in second language acquisition. This implies that the development of individual characteristics could improve the second language acquisition. The development those factors could be conducted via formal and informal language environment. Wherein, informal environment can be quite beneficial for adult second language acquisition. Formal environment are also beneficial.

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