

دراسة العلاقة بين نظريات اكتساب اللغة الثانية والخصائص فوق المقطعية (دراسة استقصائية)

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الملخص

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى فحص العلاقة بين نظريات اكتساب اللغة الثانية (SLA) وتحسين الخصائص فوق المقطعية لدى متعلمي اللغة. تُعد العناصر فوق المقطعية، مثل التنغيم، والنبرة، والإيقاع، والحدة، ضرورية للتواصل الفعال والفهم في اللغة الثانية. تستند هذه الدراسة إلى استبيان بحثي يستقصي كيف تفسر نظريات اكتساب اللغة الثانية المختلفة – بما في ذلك فرضية المدخل لكراشن، وفرضية التفاعل للونغ، وفرضية الانتباه لشميدت – عملية اكتساب السمات النبرية. إن التقاطع بين نظريات اكتساب اللغة والعناصر فوق المقطعية يبرز الطبيعة المعقدة لاكتساب اللغة. ورغم أن النظريات الأساسية لاكتساب اللغة تقدم رؤى مهمة في اكتساب البنى المقطعية، فإن هناك اعترافاً متزايداً بضرورة إدماج الجوانب النبرية ضمن هذه الأطر. وينبغي أن تستكشف الدراسات المستقبلية بشكل أعمق كيفية تكيف نظريات اكتساب اللغة الثانية لتشمل اكتساب العناصر فوق المقطعية، مما يعزز فهم كفاءة اللغة الثانية.

الكلمات المفتاحية :

Investigating the Relationship Between SLA Theories and the Suprasegmental Features (A Survey Study)

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Abstract

This study seeks to examine the correlation between Second Language Acquisition (SLA) theories and the enhancement of suprasegmental properties in language learners. Suprasegmental elements, such as intonation, stress, rhythm, and pitch, are essential for effective communication and comprehension in a second language. This survey-based research investigates how different Second Language Acquisition theories, including Krashen's Input Hypothesis, Long's Interaction Hypothesis, and Schmidt's Noticing Hypothesis, explain the acquisition of prosodic features. The convergence of SLA theories and suprasegmental elements underscores the complex nature of language acquisition. Although core SLA theories offer significant insights into the acquisition of segmental structures, there is an increasing acknowledgment of the necessity to incorporate prosodic aspects inside these frameworks. Future study should further investigate the adaptation of SLA theories to include the acquisition of suprasegmental elements, thereby enhancing the understanding of second language proficiency.

Introduction

Second Language Acquisition (SLA) has historically been a central theme in linguistic research, seeking to comprehend how individuals learn languages beyond their native tongue. This field is centered on several theoretical frameworks, including the Input Hypothesis, Interaction Hypothesis, Output Hypothesis, and Sociocultural Theory, which provide diverse perspectives on the cognitive, social, and environmental aspects affecting language acquisition. Although much of second language acquisition theory has historically concentrated on morphosyntactic and lexical development, the acquisition of phonological elements, especially suprasegmental traits, has garnered relatively little focus. Suprasegmental elements, such as intonation, stress, rhythm, and pitch, are essential for efficient communication, since they affect speech intelligibility, fluency, and perceived competency.

The convergence of SLA theories with suprasegmental acquisition is a vital but under examined domain. Comprehending how learners acquire suprasegmentals and the degree to which second language acquisition theories address this process may yield significant insights for both theoretical advancement and educational practice. This research seeks to analyze the correlation between significant second language acquisition theories and the attainment of suprasegmental features, emphasizing how these theories either endorse, neglect, or contest the mechanisms involved in mastering the prosodic aspects of a second language. This approach aims to connect theory with speech pedagogy, so enhancing complete and effective language learning frameworks.

Literature Review:

Second Language Acquisition (SLA) includes multiple theoretical frameworks that explain how individuals learn a second language. Suprasegmental elements, including intonation, stress, rhythm, and pitch, are crucial for expressing meaning and facilitating efficient communication. This paper analyzes the convergence of SLA theories and suprasegmental features, emphasizing how each theory addresses the acquisition of these prosodic aspects.

Theoretical Frameworks in Second Language Acquisition

Input Hypothesis (Krashen, 1982)

Stephen Krashen's information Hypothesis asserts that language learning transpires when learners encounter understandable information that slightly exceeds their existing skill level ($i+1$). Although Krashen underscores the significance of semantic content in input, the theory does not explicitly tackle the acquisition of suprasegmental properties. Nonetheless, intelligible input, encompassing natural prosodic patterns, may enhance the internalization of these characteristics.

Interaction Hypothesis (Long, 1983)

Michael Long's Interaction Hypothesis emphasizes the importance of interactive communication in second language acquisition. By negotiating meaning and adjusting input, learners encounter genuine prosodic cues, including stress patterns and intonation contours, essential for effective communication. This interactive exposure may augment learners' awareness of suprasegmental properties.

Noticing Hypothesis (Schmidt, 1990).

Richard Schmidt's Noticing Hypothesis posits that learners must consciously recognize language elements in the input for acquisition to occur. Suprasegmental qualities, typically nuanced and reliant on context, necessitate deliberate focus. Schmidt's hypothesis posits that enhancing learners' awareness of certain traits can promote their acquisition.

Input Processing Theory (VanPatten, 1993)

Bill VanPatten's Input Processing Theory examines the mechanisms by which learners assimilate language input. The theory mainly focuses on syntactic and morphological elements, however the processing techniques it outlines may also encompass suprasegmental aspects. For example, learners' inclination towards content words rather than function words may affect their perception and creation of stress patterns.

Suprasegmental Characteristics in Second Language Acquisition

The Function of Prosody in Language Acquisition

Prosody includes components such as tone, rhythm, and stress, which are essential for expressing meaning beyond the lexical level. In second language acquisition, mastering prosodic characteristics is crucial for attaining native-like pronunciation and communicative proficiency. Studies show that students frequently have difficulties with the subtle application of prosody, affecting their clarity and communicating efficacy.

Impact of Native Language on Suprasegmental Acquisition

The first language (L1) profoundly impacts the learning of suprasegmental characteristics in a second language (L2). Phonological transfer may result in L2 prosodic patterns that reflect L1 traits, potentially leading to miscommunication. For instance, variations between stress-timed and syllable-timed languages might influence learners' rhythmic and intonational patterns in the second language.

Developmental Dimensions of Prosodic Acquisition

The learning of suprasegmental features is a developmental process, wherein learners advance from basic to more intricate prosodic structures. Research indicates that children and adults demonstrate distinct patterns in pitch and duration utilization, implying that age and cognitive development influence prosodic acquisition.

Integrating Second Language Acquisition Theories with Suprasegmental Features

Traditional second language acquisition theories have predominantly concentrated on segmental elements of language, however recent studies highlight the necessity of incorporating suprasegmental components into SLA frameworks. The Interaction Hypothesis and Noticing Hypothesis elucidate how learners might acquire prosodic features through exposure and deliberate focus. The Input Processing Theory's emphasis on processing mechanisms provides insights into how learners may internalize prosodic patterns

Theories of Second Language Acquisition.

Theories of second language acquisition (SLA) are predicated on the mechanisms by which individuals learn a second language. A substantial body of research in the field of Second

Language Acquisition (SLA) is intricately connected to various disciplines, including linguistics, psychology, sociolinguistics, neurology, and education. Consequently, the majority of SLA ideas may be traced back to one of the aforementioned systems. While it is known that each relevant theory addresses a specific aspect of the language learning process, no overall theory of second-language acquisition is unanimously accepted by scholars (Cook, 2013).

Determining a precise date for the emergence of Second Language Acquisition (SLA) as a multidisciplinary discipline is challenging (Gass, Selinker, & Larry, 2008); nonetheless, two notable publications have significantly contributed to the advancement of contemporary SLA research. On one hand, authors such as Corder (1967) contested a behaviorist perspective in the domain of second language acquisition (SLA), positing that learners engage their internal intrinsic linguistic processes. Conversely, authors like Selinker (1972), as referenced by Piccardo and North (2019), elucidated that second-language learners possess distinct linguistic systems that differ from those established for first and second languages (VanPatten, Benati, and Alessandro, 2010). In summary, during the 1970s, SLA studies extensively analyzed the principles of Corder and Selinker, as well as competing behaviorist perspectives on language acquisition. The study during that period was mostly guided by naturalistic investigations of individuals acquiring English as a second language (VanPatten, Benati, and Alessandro, 2010).

In the 1980s, Stephen Krashen proposed his input hypothesis, asserting that language acquisition is only governed by intelligible input, which refers to linguistic information that learners can comprehend. Having established supremacy in the realm of Second Language Acquisition, Krashen's approach significantly influenced language learning, although left certain fundamental processes unresolved. Most research projects in the 1980s sought to address the identified deficiencies (VanPatten, Benati, & Alessandro, 2010).

During the 1990s, novel hypotheses were introduced, including Michael Long's interaction theory, Merrill Swain's output hypothesis, and Richard Schmidt's noticing hypothesis. Nevertheless, research mostly focused on linguistic theories of second language acquisition rooted in Chomsky's universal grammar, alongside psychological frameworks such as skill acquisition theory and connectionism. The predominant trend was the sociocultural approach, which addresses second language acquisition in relation to the learner's social context (VanPatten, Benati, & Alessandro, 2010).

Recent research from the 2000s has focused on the same domains as that of the 1990s, which were categorized into two primary approaches: linguistic and psychological. VanPatten and Benati assert that this tendency is unlikely to experience significant alterations in the future (VanPatten, Benati, & Alessandro, 2010).

Larsen-Freeman and Long (1991) identify numerous acquisition models, totaling 40, that have fluctuated in prominence. These models encompass the semantic theory, universal grammar, sociocultural theory, the monitor model, input hypothesis, output hypothesis, interaction hypothesis, competition model, second-language acquisition, connectionism, noticing hypothesis, automaticity, and the declarative/procedural model, along with second-language acquisition and memory. A restricted number of these models address the SLA of suprasegmental-related processes, although only a minority have been utilized in studies concerning phonological features. The subsequent text provides a concise overview of theories and models pertaining to the acquisition of prosody and intonation.

Approaches to Second Language Prosody Acquisition

In linguistics, phonological elements encompass rhythm, intonation, and stress (Pell, 2005). Prosody encompasses various attributes of utterances articulated by the speaker, including the speaker's emotional state, the structure of the utterance, contrast, emphasis, focus, and other linguistic features not conveyed through vocabulary or grammar (Pell, 2005).

Likewise, as demonstrated by the ontogeny-phylogeny technique (2001), EFL learners would be more proficient by absorbing the phonemes that have the greatest distinction from those in their First Language. The most significant challenge would be the noises that are nearly equivalent to the current units (Gut, 2003).

Second Language Acquisition and suprasegmental characteristics

Two concerns pertaining to SLA are pertinent to the aims and objectives of the current study and have impacted the acquisition of intonation by EFL learners. The first concept is language learning techniques (LLS), and the second is interaction theory (IT). The following two subsections provide

a detailed explanation of these topics. Strategies for Language Acquisition The literature on second language acquisition offers a range of research aimed at fostering diversity in methodologies for elucidating language teaching and learning processes. Consequently, the theories pertaining to Second Language Acquisition, including those of Lenneberg (1967) and Selinker (1972, as cited by Piccardo & North, 2019), along with Flege (1998), have significantly enhanced the literature by providing diverse frameworks for research in applied linguistic domains, similarly to the contributions of Akita (2001) and Fantazi (2003). Determining the appropriate theory for use in the study of intonation is challenging.

The primary objective of education is to facilitate optimal learning environments for students and to enable the application of learned knowledge in novel contexts. Oxford (1993) contended that learners exhibit variability in traits (e.g., gender, age, motivation, competence, cognition, and style), which correlate with constraints on their learning rates and other challenges associated with the tactics employed in their learning.

Chamot, Barnhardt, El-Dinary, and Robbins (1999) asserted that language learning strategies are methods or tactics employed by learners to enhance a learning task. Rubin (1987) characterized language learning strategies (LLS) as methods that facilitate the construction of the language system developed by learners, directly influencing their learning. In contrast, Oxford (1993) described LLS as deliberate acts or tactics employed by learners to enhance their second language (L2) proficiency. Consequently, she contended that by implementing these tactics, learners might improve their internalization and application of the target language. Oxford (1990, 1993) presented instances of Language Learning Strategies (LLS) such as repetition, selective attention, note-taking, and collaboration.

The present study has accepted the aforementioned definition by Oxford (1993). Consequently, LLS may manifest as specific tactics and activities employed by learners to enhance their internalization of L2 language knowledge. The study utilized this definition to enhance intonation proficiency. Oxford (1993) identified 12 characteristics of Language Learning Strategies (LLS), which are:

1. Communicative Competence Enhance the learner's communicative proficiency
- Self-directed Facilitate learners' ability to identify and enhance their self-directedness.
- Three innovative functions of educators Guide, consultant, advisor, coordinator, etc.
- Problem-focused Address students' challenges .

2. Operative Mandate particular student actions and behaviors to improve educational outcomes.
3. Diverse functions Meta-cognitive, social, and affective functions.
4. Facilitate education through direct engagement.

Not consistently observable A multitude of actions can be discerned through mental association.
Conscious Conscious effort from learners is essential for regulating their learning.

The qualities of LLS are interrelated; for instance, problem-oriented and action-based approaches may be adaptable for instruction. Oxford (1990) categorized the initial three characteristics as 'typical' features, while the subsequent features were designated as "other characteristics." It is evident, however, that every method may encompass one or more of the aforementioned qualities, rendering the categorization of traits into groups somewhat unnecessary.

Pronunciation Learning Strategies

Pronunciation learning methods (PLS) are essential for studying the phonological components of a language. These tactics aid learners in improving their articulation, emphasis, cadence, and intonation. Research underscores their significance in second language acquisition (SLA), particularly for learners pursuing communicative competence.

Categories of Pronunciation Acquisition Strategies Researchers have classified PLS into cognitive, metacognitive, social, and affective strategies:

1. Cognitive Strategies: Methods like as repetition, emulating native speakers, and emphasizing phonetic precision are included in this category. Students frequently utilize auditory and visual resources to recognize and rehearse sounds.
 2. Metacognitive Strategies: These encompass the planning, monitoring, and assessment of pronunciation acquisition. Students can establish objectives and monitor their advancement in mastering particular sounds or patterns.
 3. Social Strategies: Engaging with native speakers, participating in language exchange programs, or group practice enhances pronunciation proficiency. Peer and instructor feedback is essential.
- Affective Strategies: Regulating emotions and motivation improves learning. For example, alleviating nervousness using relaxation methods or enhancing confidence through positive reinforcement facilitates improved pronunciation.

The Function of Technology in Pronunciation Acquisition Recent studies underscore the impact of technology developments in PLS. Language learning applications, online videos, and

pronunciation-focused tools such as speech recognition software have transformed conventional methods. These tools offer learners immediate feedback, chances for self-directed learning, and exposure to genuine language usage.

Obstacles in Executing PLS Notwithstanding its advantages, learners may encounter challenges such as restricted access to native speakers, inadequate feedback, or diminished motivation. Moreover, personal variations in learning methods and linguistic backgrounds influence the efficacy of PLS. Strategies for learning pronunciation are essential for attaining phonological precision and communicative proficiency in a second language. Future studies may investigate the incorporation of PLS into curriculum development and the efficacy of AI-driven solutions for enhancing pronunciation.

Griffith (2003) and Oxford (1993) emphasized the role of using LLS for better achievement and proficiency in mastering the knowledge of the target language. The importance of LLS is in its long-term role throughout a learner's lifetime. Although it is not really known, as Oxford (1990) argued, how much LLS can participate in learners' success as this has not yet been examined, it appears that most learners have a positive reaction to learning in training experiences.

Cohen (2003) asserted that the main aim behind training learners in the strategies is to improve learners' knowledge of tools that lead to learning the language efficiently. Also, LLS would help learners to evaluate and monitor their performance. On the other hand, Anderson (2002) asserted that teachers should emphasize developing learners' ability to control and understand direct and indirect learning strategies. Regarding the role of LLS in the learning and teaching process mechanism, Oxford (1990) argued that direct learning strategies assist in the creation of input in the long term memory of learners which could be retrieved when needed. In addition, she stated that learning strategies might assist learners to develop communicative competence. Anderson (2002) emphasised that when learners control the use of such strategies, they will likely achieve their learning aims.

Regarding the literature on pronunciation learning strategies (PLS), it is noticeable that little research has been conducted on the use of LLS in this field. Peterson (2000) was the first who studied PLS in foreign language learning. She examined the use of learning strategies among 11 English native speakers who were learning Spanish pronunciation in the US. The data were

the participants' interviews and diaries. The participants were asked to record their remarks about their pronunciation learning progress in these diaries. After a two-week period, an interview was conducted to understand some of their remarks. Then, the students were asked to determine the strategies they were using at that time or had previously used in learning Spanish. Finally, by collecting and analysing the data about the use of strategies by the participants, Peterson (2000) found twenty-one pronunciation learning tactics that were later condensed into 12 main learning strategies.

It is shown that the 12 PLS introduced by Peterson (2000) and tactics for each of the 12 sets. Peterson pointed out that Sets 6, 10 and 11 represent the tactics already documented by Oxford (1990), while the other strategies she lists were new and not mentioned in Oxford's main list. The other tactics had not been mentioned in the literature before. Besides, it should be noted here that Peterson's (2000) research was merely hypothesis-generating in orientation, i.e., she did not consider examining the impact of LLS on pronunciation learning. Thus, such effectiveness of the strategies required further research.

In the same vein, one study by Varasarin (2007) employed Peterson's (2000) framework in pronunciation teaching that took place in Thailand on speaking confidence, LLS, and pronunciation training. The study included two cycles: the first included training five teachers of English and the second involved the five teachers giving similar training they got in the first cycle to twenty 8th- to 10th-grade students. The training occurred over three weeks with five two-hour classes in one week. The students were examined before and after the training process through reading passages, and during the training, they wrote reports and had certain interviews with the researcher to determine the problems in the training. In conclusion, the findings showed improvement among teachers and students in terms of confidence and correct speech. In addition, both teachers and students expressed an interest in the LLS introduced by Oxford (1990) and Peterson (2000) which were offered in these classes.

Another study conducted by Sardegna (2011) tested the role of LLS in pronunciation learning. The study took place in the US and included thirty-eight international graduate students. The participants were 19 Chinese, six Vietnamese, four Korean, three Thai, three Turkish, one Spanish, one French, and one Portuguese. They had been taught pronunciation learning strategies to develop their oral English skills outside of class. The training course was over four

consecutive weeks, including three fifty-minute classes a week. The training involved using certain PLS, e.g., production, perception and prediction. The aim of the study was to determine the long-term effects of empowering participants with strategies to develop their competence to link sounds across and within words. The results revealed that students showed significant progress over time.

Eckstein (2007) conducted a study on pronunciation strategies, too. The study involved 183 adult ESL learners and took place in the UK. The participants were classified into three levels: low intermediate, intermediate and high intermediate. The aim was to test the strategies of pronunciation learning. The participants were provided with an intensive English programme to prepare them for future English academic work. The results showed that good pronunciation learners employed the strategies more frequently than weaker pronunciation learners did.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study provides compelling evidence of the intricate relationship between Second Language Acquisition (SLA) theories and the development of suprasegmental features in language learners. By surveying diverse learners and examining their awareness, perception, and production of prosodic elements, the research highlights the significant role that SLA theories, particularly those emphasizing input and interaction, play in facilitating the acquisition of intonation, stress, rhythm, and pitch. This study offers substantial evidence of the complex link between Second Language Acquisition (SLA) theories and the enhancement of suprasegmental properties in language learners. The research underscores the crucial influence of SLA theories, especially those focusing on input and interaction, in aiding the acquisition of intonation, stress, rhythm, and pitch by surveying diverse learners and analyzing their awareness, perception, and production of prosodic elements. These findings highlight the importance of integrating substantial, relevant input and interactive possibilities into language instruction, as these methods seem to enhance both segmental accuracy and prosodic competence. The study indicates that a focused emphasis on suprasegmental elements in both teaching methodologies and second language acquisition studies can enhance comprehensive and communicatively successful language learning. Subsequent research may expand upon these findings by examining how particular teaching strategies or technological resources can further assist learners in mastering prosody, hence improving their intelligibility, fluency, and overall communicative efficacy in the target language.

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