The Nature of Language Acquisition: Where L1 and L2 Acquisition Meet?

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Abstract
Language acquisition (LA) is one of the widely researched topics, and perhaps the most. It is really a complex process that has not been fully accounted for yet. There are as many questions remaining as there are many facts that have been discovered in such a field and hence an adequate characterization of such a phenomenon is still a matter of current and future research. Many researchers have asserted that though the majority of young children acquire their mother tongue with no major difficulties, there are also specific conditions that have to be attained in order for them to learn to speak (Shormani, 2012). For instance, since exposure to linguistic input plays an essential role in the LA process, it is necessary for a child to acquire a language to be exposed to such linguistic input and this requires him not to be deaf. Moreover, the exposure to linguistic input is conditioned and tied to certain age (what has been known as puberty). In fact, how humans acquire language has been one of the top-debated topics in human investigation. Thus, in this paper, I explore the nature of language acquisition in its both spheres, i.e. L1 and L2. I tackle the knowledge of language as an abstract and mysterious type of knowledge examining two most influential and most controversial theories, viz. behaviorism and mentalism and how each alone fails to account for both L1 and L2 acquisition. I, thus, maintain that a well-defined and adequate theory should be built on some kind of complementarity between both theories. I also briefly look at some attempts to modelize L2 acquisition process discussing two influential models proposed in the literature, namely, Ellis's (1993) and Krashen's (1982) based on the similarity and difference between L1 and L2 acquisition each holds, respectively.

1. Introduction

How humans acquire language has been one of the top-debated topics in human investigation and research. It has attracted a considerable number of theoretical and applied linguists, researchers and teachers alike. Different theories and models such as behaviorism, mentalism, socialism, cognitivism and interactionism have tried to account for how such a phenomenon takes place. In fact, the diversity of the present theories and models imply that the phenomenon is not that easy to handle, on the one hand, and that there is no consensus among researchers regarding such a topic of research, on the other hand. Perhaps, LA is the most controversial topic human research has come across Shormani (2012). Now, the question is why is it so? In fact, the controversy and non-consensus among researchers on how LA takes place comes from the topic it handles, viz. knowledge of language. The latter is the most abstracted and complicated phenomenon human research has come across. Language is a very systematized, precise and concise system. Language is mysterious having human-like nature: it is born, grows, and sometimes dies, and meaning is its vital web; it is fluid-flexible but sometimes extremely vague (Shormani, 2013a).

On the other hand, when language acquisition takes place, it usually follows a schedule, whatever language it is to be learned. Thus, the process does not start when the child utters its first word but rather much earlier than that (Chun, 1980). At the age of one month or so, most children are able to distinguish between their mothers' voices and the voices of other people, as well as some differences in the rhythm of speech and intonation produced by those in their surroundings (Cook, 1983, 1996). In many cases, it is apparent that children are able to understand the tone of voice as early as the age of two to four months, differentiating between joyful, angry, or soothing tones. When the child is between six and nine months old, some simple utterances of parents are associated with situations in which they are used, and thus infants learn the meanings of the first words (Mitchell & Myles, 1998; White, 1991, 2003; Cook, 1983, 1996). In addition, humans are distinguished from all other creatures in being able to possess a language as the quintessentially human trait. It has been found that every time humans talk, they are revealing something about language and its features and hence the facts of language structure are not difficult to come by. However, acquiring L1 is something a normal child does successfully, in two to three years and without the need for formal lessons. However, L2 acquisition seems to be of mysterious nature. How humans acquire a SL in addition to the already existent one they possess, how, when, where and what factors that affect such a process, among other questions constitute the crux of investigating LA phenomenon. Indeed, such questions among others have been the main focus of theoretical and applied linguistics, second language acquisition (SLA) researches and studies.

2. Knowledge of Language

Language is a very systematized, precise and concise system. Language is mysterious having human-like nature:

it is born, grows, and sometimes dies, and meaning is its vital web. Language is fluid-flexible but sometimes extremely vague (Shormani, 2013a). It is species-specific, viz. humans and only humans can acquire language and no other creature could ever succeed in this process. However, we have nothing to do with acquiring such a systematized system. This is very clear due to the fact that all normal children can acquire language. Children with high or low intelligence can acquire their mother tongue equally for intelligence has nothing to do with such acquisition. We acquire language as natural as we learn how to walk. Language acquisition takes place, indeed, as naturally as leaves coming to a tree

Now, one may question the issue of our acquisition of language in that early age when we are unable to grasp abstract objects and things. For this reason, there have been several theories trying to account for our knowledge of language one of which is that we acquire language in Stimulus-Response-Reinforcement (SRR). This actually is advocated by **Behaviorism** whose ideas are based on **Skinner's** simple experiments on animals (Skinner, 1957). In fact, this theory maintains that language acquisition is a **habit-formation** process and hence, comparing our acquisition of language to rats and very simple creatures like chimpanzees learning very simple tasks like learning to get *a banana* when they are left hungry for a long time. However, this view of language acquisition does not stand before those linguists who criticize such "nonsense" attempts in accounting for how we acquire language (Chomsky, 1959, 1968).

Another view has been advocated by **Chomsky** in his biological ontology. According to Chomsky, humans are endowed with an underlying predisposition which enables them to acquire language. Linguists (e.g. White, 2003, Cook, 2003; Shormani, 2012) ascertain that such a predisposition is biologically endowed and genetically "instilled" in our brain innately in the form of Universal Grammar (UG) which is "a set of principles, conditions and rules that are elements or properties of all human languages not merely by accident but by necessity" (Chomsky, 1981, p. 7). What we do then in our acquisition in Chomsky's views is internalize the linguistic system of the language spoken around us provided that we are exposed to sufficient and efficient input of such a language.

Other researchers (e.g. Gass & Slinker, 2008; Bruner, 1983; Shormani, 2012) advocate that we acquire language through **nature** and **nurture**. The former accounts for human language acquisition in that we humans are endowed with a faculty in our minds which is concerned with providing us with capabilities necessary for language acquisition. Such capabilities are encoded in our genes. In the latter, however, the nurture provides us with the linguistic input necessarily required for language acquisition to take place. What is exactly meant by the term "nurture" is the family, i.e. the people who speak the language around us. Thus, we acquire language through two stages, namely, pre-linguistic and linguistic. In the pre-linguistic stage, infants start acquiring language by attention-directing and attention-sharing to the objects around them and hence, establishing the referential triangle, viz. "*me, you* and *object*" where *me* refers to the infant, *you* refers to adults around him and *object* to things around (Shormani, 2013a).

The linguistic stage is divided into two substages, namely, vocal and verbal. The former refers to the cries, cooing and babbling infants make. In the latter, however, infants start producing one-word utterances, two-word utterances, etc. In principle, these utterances stand for complete sentences. For instance, a one-word utterance produced by a child like *Water!* stands for a complete sentence, viz. *I want water* or *I am thirsty*. A two-word utterance like *Daddy home!* stands also for a full sentence meaning *Daddy is at home*. In principle, our language evolves through such stages; we internalize the linguistic system of the language being acquired, set rules of our own, try to make our speech like that of the adults around us until we succeed acquiring it as a whole.

3. First Language Acquisition

L1 acquisition is a phenomenon in which a child learners his mother tongue. It is one of the mysterious topics human research has come across. In fact, language acquisition, be it of L1 or L2, has witnessed a considerable number of researches and studies. However, less has been discovered and much still mysterious. Thus, I will investigate LA of L1 and L2 in terms of the most influential theories that have tried to account for answering many questions and I think the best way to handle such issues is through such theories. Two of the most influential and controversial theories are **behaviorism** and **mentalism**.

3.1. Behaviorism

In the 50s and 60s of the 20th century, behaviorism, a psycholinguistic approach to language acquisition advocated by (Bloomfield, 1933; Skinner, 1957), was dominating the learning/teaching scene (Shormani, 2012). In the behaviorist view, language acquisition is seen as any other type of learning, i.e. as the formation of *habits* where human beings are exposed to linguistic input and learning takes place as responding to such input, and if their responses are reinforced, learning takes place in what is so-called a three dimensional procedure, i.e. *stimulus-response-reinforcement*. In other words, linguistic expressions are seen as stimuli, if a child's responses to them are reinforced, learning takes place but if not, learning will not take place. This actually makes it clear that LA in behaviorism is based on conditioning. Imitation also has a very essential role to play in language acquisition, be it of L1 or L2, as will be discussed below. Thus, L1 acquisition, from a behaviorist perspective, involves a process of learning a set of *habits* as children respond to any stimuli in their environment.

In fact, the behaviorist approach is psychological in nature. Thus, humans in their language acquisition have been compared to low-intelligence creatures like animals (i.e. rats and birds) learning very simple tasks like learning how a rat gets to the final route in a maze or a bird learning how to get food in a cage or even a chimpanzee learning how to get sticks one into the other. In other words, behaviorists view language learning by humans in the same way animals learn anything, that could happen just by chance, which is actually not. Acquiring language is much more complex than this view. It involves many cognitive and non-cognitive processes. In fact, the issue gets even more complex when examining the behaviorist view regarding L2 acquisition.

Now, as far as L2 acquisition is concerned, behaviorists view it as replacing the old linguistic habits with new ones (Shormani, 2012). The former are those belonging to L1 which is already there as a set of well-established responses in its speakers' minds. In fact, L2 acquisition is seen as difficult because of the already existent language in the human brain. In this view, learners try to connect the habits of their L1 to those of L2. This connection actually results in language transfer. This transfer has two types: positive and negative. In the former a linguistic structure is transferred from L1 into L2 but the result is a grammatical structure. This happens when the transferred structure is similar to a structure in L2. In the latter, however, the learner transfers a linguistic structure or rule from L1 into L2, but this does not exist in L2. The result of the former is a grammatical utterance while that of the latter is an ungrammatical one. Shormani (2012, p. 86) exemplifies the positive transfer in the case of Arabic-speaking learner as follows: when such a learner says: "*If you study hard, you will pass the exam,* which is a well-formed sentence in English." He also exemplifies the negative transfer as when the learners says: "*Then, went he to college early*, in which he just transfers an Arabic word order, viz. ***VSO*** into English in which such a word order does not exist" emphasis in the original). Positive transfer according to Shormani is called a facilitating factor and negative transfer is a disfacilitating one. Lado (1957, p. 58f) describes such a phenomenon stating that there are "many cases that the grammatical structure of the native language tends to be transferred to the foreign language." Lado also maintains that those structures which are similar in both languages will be easier for the learner, and those which are not, are difficult.

In addition, the behaviorist approach with respect to teaching has a twofold implication: behaviorists strongly believe that *practice makes perfect*, i.e. learning will take place by imitating and repeating the same structure time after time, and hence teaching should focus on difficult structures, viz. those L2 structures that are different from those of L1. Therefore, the behaviorist approach leads to comparisons between L1 and L2 to find out the points of difference so as to make teaching address those differences in which the difficulty lies. On the other hand, behaviorism as a theory of language acquisition has been attacked and criticized. This criticism has been initiated when researchers' interest begins to be directed towards mentalism (i.e. a biological approach in nature). In fact, at that time linguistics has witnessed a shift from structural linguistics that was based on the description of the surface structure of large corpus of language to generative linguistics. Generative linguistics has emphasized the *rule-governed* and creative nature of human languages. The pioneer of this shift has been the American linguist Noam Chomsky as early as he first published his *Syntactic Structures* in 1957. In fact, Chomsky begins his criticism of behaviorism when he attacks Skinner's book *The Verbal Behaviour* 1957 in what is called Chomsky's (1959) *A Review of B. F. Skinner's Verbal Behavior* which is a fierce critique of not only Skinner's views but also of behaviorism as a whole. In Chomsky's own words, "I had intended this review not specifically as a criticism of Skinner's speculations regarding language, but rather as a more general critique of behaviorist (I would now prefer to say "empiricist") speculation as to the nature of higher mental processes"(p. 26). Thus, Chomsky argues that language has creativity. In other words, children acquiring their first language do not by any means learn and produce a large set of sentences (i.e. corpus). Rather, they create sentences they have never learned and or come across before. What they do is internalize rules rather than strings of words (Chomsky, 1965, 1968). He further argues that if children learn language by imitation, then how it is that they produce sentences like *Jim goed* and *it breaked*. This, in fact, shows that children are not copying language from their environment but applying rules. Thus, Chomskyan School was upset by the idea of comparing the behavior of 'rats' in labs learning to perform simple tasks to that of children learning a language which involves complexity and abstractions. For instance, Dulay *et al* (1982, p.6) hold that language can never be acquired "by imitating, memorizing and being rewarded for saying the correct things." In addition, internalizing the linguistic system of a language by children implies that they are active in the language acquisition process and not just imitators as held by behaviorism. Thus, such behaviorist views regarding language acquisition lead to attacking behaviorism as a whole, there is much to be attributed to environment, however.

3.2. Mentalism

As has been stated above, the behaviorist view of language acquisition is, to some extent, not adequate because of its failure to account, among many things, for the occurrence of language, which is not in the input learners are exposed to. Therefore, researchers attempt to look for an alternative theoretical framework (Long, 1983, 2003). Here, researchers have abandoned looking at 'nurture', i.e. how environmental factors shape learning and look at 'nature', i.e. the role of innate properties of human mind in shaping learning. This new paradigm is

referred to as mentalist or nativist in orientation. In the mentalist theoretical framework of language learning, there are many things emphasized like the fact that only human beings are capable of acquiring language. In that, the human mind is pre-equipped with a faculty for language learning, i.e. LAD (=Language Acquisition Device), and input is needed but only to "trigger' the operation of the LAD (Shormani, 2012).

Now, taking the complexity and abstraction of language to which Chomsky has provided examples such as the rules underlying the formation of questions in any language and the use of reflexive pronouns in English (Chomsky, 1968), one feels embarrassed by the quick acquisition of these given the limited input the children are exposed to. This has been termed by Chomsky as *Plato's Problem*. Further, Chomsky (1987) adds that there are too complex linguistic structures that cannot be learned so quickly from the environment around children. The first one is wh-questions and their formation. The second includes pieces of language involving ambiguity. The former, for instance, includes such wh-questions as *what are you talking about*? where such constructions involve several syntactic complicated operations like subject-verb inversion, wh-movement, among others. The latter involves structures like *Ali requested Alia to leave* where there are two possible interpretations. The first is *It is Ali who leaves and* the second is *It is Alia who leaves*.

In addition, LA in mentalism has been seen as a hypothesis testing phenomenon Cook (1983). Cook emphasizes that "a child creates a hypothesis about the grammar more or less at random" (p.6) allowed by UG and, then, when he produces an utterance in accordance with this hypothesis, he will get a feedback from the surroundings whether from parents, caretakers or whosoever, and this feedback will prove to him whether the produced utterance is correct or the otherwise. In fact, the child cannot decide for himself that the hypothesis created is correct unless he gets feedback telling him, if or not, that he has committed a mistake. Self-hypothesis creating and testing can be formulated only in later stages of acquisition, otherwise how is it that a child may create hypotheses in an early stage when he is unable to deal with abstract concepts? To me, as it seems, in language acquisition, the child has devises hypotheses compatible with the linguistic input presented to him. After that, he "must select from the store of potential grammars a specific one that is appropriate" (Cook, 1983, p.6-7) and coincide with the linguistic data he is exposed to.

In fact, the revolutionary ideas in LA have attracted many researchers to investigate the hidden secrets of language acquisition in particular and of language as a whole in general. Many linguists and researchers (e.g. Brown, 1973) get interested in such ideas and conduct a considerable number of studies, be they cross-sectional or longitudinal, on children or adults. Brown (1973) has done study on the acquisition of particular morphemes and found that there are similarities in acquiring the morphemes *–ed, -s/-es* by children acquiring English irrespective of their L1s. In addition, many researchers have traced the stages through which L1 is acquired allover the world. Mitchell and Myles (1998), for instance, hold that children allover the world go through similar stages in their acquisition of their native languages irrespective of the languages being acquired. These stages are presented as follows from (Mitchell and Myles, 1998 based on Aitchison, 1989, p.75).

Language stage	Beginning age
Crying	birth
Cooing	6 weeks
Babbling	6 months
Intonation patterns	8 months
One-word utterances	1 year
Two-word utterances	18 months
Word inflections	2 years
Rare or complex constructions	5 years
Mature speech	10 years

An interested phenomenon researchers have looked at is the stages children go through while acquiring irregular verbs in English. For instance, Shormani (2013a) maintains that for acquiring the past form of the verb *go*, children pass through three stages. These are illustrated and exemplified as follows: *Daddy goed, Daddy wented* and *Daddy went*. Only in the third stage, they fully acquire the verb and its forms. It has been also found that children all over the world "not only acquire negatives around the same age but they also mark the negative in similar ways in all languages, by initially attaching some negative marker to the outside of the sentence: *no go to bed* … and gradually moving the negative marker inside the sentence" (Mitchell & Myles,1998, p. 26f). Consider the following stages of acquiring the negatives, *no* and *not* and contracting the latter onto *did*.

Stage 1
Daddy go no
not big dog
Stage 2
Here no cats
Mommy can't dance
Stage 3
She not crying

No one didn't come
In stage 1 above, the negative particle is placed outside the utterance whether initially or finally. In stage 2, however, the negative particle appears inside the utterance and contractions appear, too, as in *Mommy can't dance*. In stage 3, *auxiliary + not* is acquired though some errors occur. It can be noticed that the copula *be* has not been acquired yet. Double negative also appears. So, looking at these examples, it can be hypothesized that children's language is *rule- governed*, the rules children create do not correspond to those of adults, however. A strong piece of evidence that children do not merely imitate in a *parrot-like* fashion in their acquisition of language but rather internalize rules of the language is that children produce forms like *writed* and *goed* which they have never heard before and hence they are not imitating. Another piece of evidence is when children acquire the plural morpheme. For example, children have been shown a picture of *a wug* and told that *this is a wug*. When adding another picture of another *wug*, they have been told *Now there's another one. There are two of them. There are two…,* 91% of the children replied *wugs* (Mitchell & Myles,1998). What this implies also is that children are not mere imitators and passive interlocutors in LA but rather they are active, they interact with those around and process linguistic input, internalize the linguistic system of their language and devise rules as well.

In addition, when children formulate or devise incorrect rules, it is difficult to correct them. In other words, correcting their mistakes by a caretaker, for instance, is not that easy. Children are found to be resistant and persistent to such corrections. Mitchell & Myles (1998, p. 28f) report on a study showing how children do not respond to correction provided to them. This is illustrated as follows.
CHILD: I want the other one spoon.
FATHER: You mean, you want THE OTHER SOOPN?
CHILD: Yes, I want the other one spoon, please, Daddy.
FATHER: Can you say the other spoon?
CHILD: Other…one...spoon.
FATHER: Say ….'other'
CHILD: other.
FATHER: 'Spoon'
CHILD: Spoon
FATHER: 'Other…Spoon'
CHILD: Other ….spoon. Now give me other one spoon?
On the other hand, this does not mean that what has been expressed by *Mentalism* is absolutely true. For instance, Bruner (1983), in what is known as interactionism, maintains that environment plays a major role in language acquisition more than LAD as suggested by Chomsky and proposes instead a Language Acquisition Support System (LASS). In fact, what Bruner means by this is that the family or entourage of the child plays a central role in the acquisition process. However, he places more emphasis on caretaker and claims that child language acquisition depends in the first place on Baby Talk provided to him by the caretaker whose speech is a *very simplified* code (Ferguson, 1964; Shormani, 2012). However, to me, as it stands, the role played by the environment in language acquisition cannot be denied but not to the extent advocated by Bruner and his thoughts. In fact, interactionism has been based on *Socio-cultural Development Theory* founded by the Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky which, to me, is not acquisition-oriented. In fact, interactionism as a whole provides questionable issues such as how is it that from a very simplified linguistic input provided to him by the caretaker, the child formulates so complicated hypotheses and rules such as those concerning wh-formation in English, for instance? In addition, interactionism addresses only L1 acquisition and does not tackle that of L2. These facts, among others, to me, make interactionism not that steady and reliable approach to LA in its two spheres.
Apart from this, Chomsky places much emphasis on the innate properties a child is born with and attributes language acquisition to such properties. He focuses on this aspect ignoring the salient role played by the environment. In fact, he seems to reduce language to its syntax and hence regarding meaning as a secondary component. For instance, a sentence such as *Colourless green ideas sleep furiously* may be considered as part of the English language, for it is syntactically correct, and therefore worth of study by syntacticians, though it has no meaning. An utterance such as *The teacher he not teaches today*, on the other hand, is of no interest to him simply because it is not syntactically correct and hence ignoring the meaning expressed by this sentence. Further, mentalism disregards the social situation in which language is normally produced. Specifically, Chomsky disregards the situation in which the child learns his first language albeit somewhere else he attributes very little to environment in such a process (Shormani, 2012).

4. Second Language Acquisition
As has been discussed so far, the first language a human acquires is his L1, and if he is to acquire another language, it means that the latter takes place when there is already an existent language in his brain. This area of research has been initiated only in the 2nd half of the 20th century (Ellis, 1997; Cook, 1983; Shormani, 2012, among many others). For instance, Ellis (1997) argues that SLA emergence is not accidentally in this time but as

a result of "the global Village" and the "the World Wide Web" when communication among people has expanded beyond their local speech communities. It is because of these fast and vast changes on allover the globe, it has been necessary to learn a second language. In fact, SLA has received so much research but again there is still no consensus due to the complexity of the subject matter and human diversity of thoughts. It is a field "about which everyone seems to have an opinion" (Gass& Selinker, 2008, p.xv). For instance, some linguists argue that SLA is a process whereby people acquire a language subsequent to their L1. It is the "systematic study of how people acquire a second language" (Ellis, 1997, p. 3). Other researchers (e.g. Shormani, 2012; Schachter, 1990; Schumann, 1978) maintain that to learn a second language is to get closer to the "Other" culturally, socially and economically and so on. Some others (e.g. Gass& Selinker, 2008) see SLA as a multidisciplinary area defining it as "the process of learning another language after the basics of the first have been acquired, starting at about five years of age and thereafter" (p.10).

However, a question should be raised here, i.e. is there any difference or similarity between SLA and that of L1? And if so, to what extent could this difference or similarity be stated? Let's try to answer this question in terms of both theories. As far as behaviorism is concerned, L1 acquisition is seen as a process of making use of what has been called *the black box* being "filled" with linguistic knowledge as the child acquires his L1 and continues to do so (White, 2000, 2003; Chomsky, 1965; Cook, 1983, 2003; Chun, 1980; Pinker, 1989; Gass & Selinker, 2008; Dulay *et al* 1982; McLaughlin, 1987; Saville-Troike, 2006). What happens is that a child is exposed to linguistic stimuli and gets reinforced if his produced piece of language is correct. Then, the child imitates those who are around and constitutes a language. On the other hand, SLA acquisition takes place in a period when the *black box* is not "empty." In other words, SLA comes when there is already an existent language in the brain. L2 acquisition, then, is replacing the old linguistic "habits" with new ones where the former belong to L1 and the later to L2. Thus, there exists a difference between L1 and L2 insomuch as behaviorism is concerned.

However, as far as mentalism is concerned, Chun (1980) maintains that there is a similarity between L1 and L2 acquisition which is that both processes result in a language system which is not like that of the adult or native speaker's norm. In addition, learners of both systems progress through a series of stages by means of internalizing rules about each linguistic system and making use of them in their production. Brown (1973) in his morpheme studies has shown that learners of L1 and L2 develop through the same stages. He has concluded that and as far as English as SL is concerned, acquiring the plural morpheme –*s* or the past morpheme, -*ed*, L1 and L2 learners pass through the same stages. However, acquisition of L1 and L2 are still different, and, to me, this difference is peripheral. L1 acquisition takes place when learners are still too young to deal with such an abstract process which involves internalizing linguistic structures and rules. However, L2 acquirers children or adults find themselves in very different situations than children acquiring their L1. Many researchers point out that L2 learners are older and smarter, already have some knowledge of at least one language, and probably have very different motivations for acquiring an L2 than they did for learning their L1. The most salient two differences between L1 and L2 learners are "age and previous linguistic knowledge" which have generated considerable research and controversy emphasized and widely discussed in *critical period* studies. To Dulay *et al*, (1982), there is no difference between both processes holding that it is "[o]ne's efforts [that] can end in the acquisition of native-fluency or a stumbling repertoire of sentences soon forgotten"(p.3). They have ascribed this difference to the role of the learner in acquiring the new language and that of the teacher who teaches it. The learner does not need particular "inborn talent" to be successful in learning that language. Rather, what the learner and teacher need is only to "*do it right*" (p.3, emphasis mine). This issue will be much clear in the next section.

4.1. L2 Learning or **Acquisition?**

Differentiating between learning and acquisition, Krashen (1981, 1982), attributing the former to L2 and the latter to L1, claims that learning comes as a result of formal instruction, i.e. conscious knowledge of "easy" rules of any second language being learned, such as past tense form and subject-verb agreement in English, for instance. He further claims that this knowledge can be accessed by learners who are monitor-users when they 1) have time, 2) focus accuracy, and 3) know the rule. An unspeeded, discrete-point test may meet all such conditions. Whether the learner is a child or an adult, most of SL, according to Krashen, is acquired via the creative construction process, i.e. through the processing of comprehensible input received in natural communication. The result of this informal exposure is the acquired system, or acquisition, that is, what the learner knows about a language at the unconscious level. It is the acquired system that does most of the work in normal SL use, the learned system acting only as a monitor, planning and editing the output from the acquired system on the rare occasions when the three conditions for its use are met.

Nevertheless, agreeing with Dulay *et al* (1982), Ellis (1997) argues that if there is a difference, it has to be accounted in terms of individual differences, which depend on effort, attitudes, amount of exposure, quality of teaching, and plain talent. He adds that second language in this sense does not contrast with 'foreign' language. What Ellis means by this is that there is no difference between to learn a language in a natural setting and to learn a language in the classroom. Ellis' view of SLA contrasts considerably with the view held by Krashen as seen above. Saville-Troike (2006) maintains that language can be acquired in a formal or an informal setting without distinguishing between learning and acquisition. In this view, she supports Cook's (1983) and Ellis's

(1997) views of language acquisition and contrasts with Krashen's. To her, there are two types of acquisition, viz. formal and informal. The former occurs when a Russian student, for instance, takes a class in Arabic and vice versa and the latter occurs when an Arabic-speaking child is brought to Japan and hence "picks up" Japanese when he attends school and plays with his Japanese peers. So, for the latter to take place, communication is a necessary step in the acquisition process while for the former "specialized instruction" is maintained. In addition, she questions three basic issues central to language acquisition, viz. the exact knowledge L2 learners come to know, the way in which such a learner acquires this knowledge and the reasons behind the native-like acquisition by some learners but not by some others. She believes that there is no complete consensus among SLA researchers regarding such phenomena ascribing such controversy to the different methodologies applied in studying SLA which are different in nature and that researchers who study SLA come "from academic disciplines which differ greatly in theory and research methods" (Saville-Troike, 2006, p. 6). Further, Mitchell & Myles (1998) see SLA as "learning any language to any level, provided only that the learning of the 'second' language takes place sometime later than the acquisition of the first language" (p.29).

Gass & Selinker (2008) support Krashen's view in distinguishing L1 from L2 acquisition as they hold that the latter involves formal and systematic settings like classroom instruction while the former is unsystematic and unstructured. The former is conscious and the later takes place subconsciously. However, what can be considered to be an addition introduced by them to the field of SLA study is that they have used the term *acquisition* as referring to *learning* or *using* a second or foreign language. However, they hold that there is a strong relationship between L2 acquisition and L1, in that, L1 acquisition underlies the basis of SLA and that many questions put forth by second language research stem from the same questions in child language acquisition. However, this distinction has been criticized by many researchers (e.g. Zobl, 1995; Robinson, 1997; Long, 1983). For instance, Long (1983, p.361) criticizes Krashen's ideas about distinguishing learning from acquisition holding that attaining formal operations stage of cognitive development is suggested by "conscious (meta-)linguistic knowledge." If this is true, he maintains, "young children cannot *learn* or *monitor* in these technical senses" (emphasis in the original). Children, he adds, will not get any benefit from such formal learning if such ways are followed. Likewise, it is not possible for either children or adults to profit "from instruction at "intermediate" proficiency levels or beyond." This is, he assumes, due to the fact that "advances in proficiency at later stages via learning would involve more complex rules." These rules are neither known (described by pedagogic grammarians), teachable, learnable, usable, nor several of these. In fact, what Long emphasizes is that SLA should provide the learners, be they children or adults, with "a source of comprehensible input (for acquisition) to beginners, who often cannot obtain this elsewhere" instead of teaching few rules or even few dialogues which have no benefit for both kinds of learners.
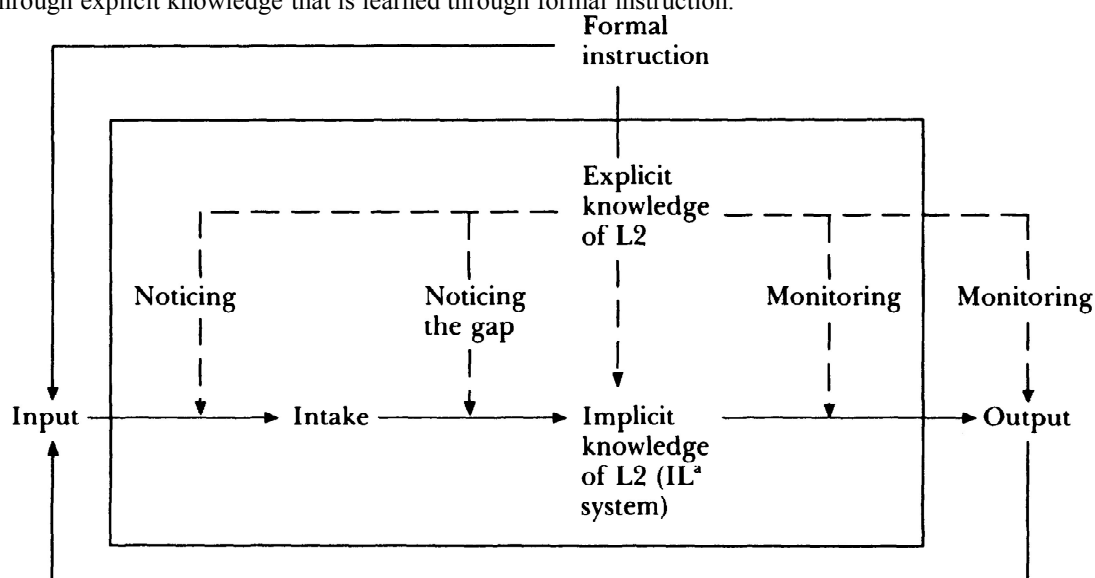
4.2. SLA Modelization

What one gets from the above always-diverged and rarely-converged views regarding LA, be it of L1 or L2, is that LA process is not that easy to handle due to the complexity of the topic being researched as a very mysterious and abstracted phenomenon (i.e. knowledge of language). One also gets clear that LA is a very hot-debated phenomenon and that there are still many more facts that are still out of reach in such a field of study. This actually leads us to conclude that investigating human language and its acquisition is one of the complicated phenomena, if not the most!

Accordingly, there have been several attempts in SLA literature for there being modelized methods SLA process could be understood through. Those models are different in scope and nature. For instance, there are those behaviorism-oriented and those mentalism-oriented. The former are best represented by Spolsky's (1989) where interaction among several components leads to learner's motivation, which is in turn integrated with some of his personal characteristics like age, personality, etc. until the acquisition will have been attained. The latter, however, are best represented by Towell & Hawkins's (1994) who have proposed a model for SLA based on UG. This model "attempts to integrate how learners [acquire] the L2 system with how they learn to use [it]" (Mitchell & Myles, 1998, p. 92). They have, in fact, made use of UG properties to account for the reasons behind the learners following *rigid stages* in their L2 acquisition and how and why certain grammatical properties occur before others. There are also those models which are based on either the similarity between L1 and L2 acquisition or the difference between them. I will discuss these in more details as follows.

4.2.1. Similarity-based Modelization

One of these similarity-based models is proposed by Ellis's (1993). As can be seen in Figure 1, some kind of difference between "input, intake, and implicit L2 knowledge is maintained" (Shormani, 2012, p.64). Input is represented by the "samples of the L2 that the learner is exposed to as a result of contact with the language in communication (oral and written)." According to Ellis, formal instruction provides input where learners are exposed to the L2 they are learning. Further, intake is the "linguistic properties in the input to which the learner is attended." Thus, input in Ellis's model comprises intake as the former is the whole linguistic data a learner is exposed to. However, the learner will not process all such data. He will process only some of such data which constitute the intake. When such intake is processed, it will be incorporated in his linguistic system and finally become implicit knowledge of the L2. In fact, in Ellis's model, there are two ways in which the learner

internalizes the implicit knowledge: the first is by electing intake out of the input he is exposed to. The second is directly through explicit knowledge that is learned through formal instruction.

ᵃIL = interlanguage.

Figure 2: Ellis' Model for SLA based on (Ellis, 1993)

4.2.1.2. Difference-based Modelization

Krashen's model of SLA has been one of the most controversial in SLA field. In fact, the controversy caused by Krashen's model lies in that Krashen has distinguished between *acquisition* and *learning*. To Krashen, the former is that process which takes place spontaneously and naturally in an informal setting where learners are not aware of the language rules; in that, it takes place subconsciously while the latter is a process which takes place in formal setting like classroom and the learners are aware of the rules of the language they are learning. In Krashen's view, learning results in "knowing about language." Summarizing what accounts for language acquisition be it of L1 or L2, Krashen (1982) states:

> What theory implies, quite simply, is that language acquisition, first or second, occurs when comprehension of real messages occurs, and when the acquirer is not 'on the defensive... Language acquisition does not require extensive use of conscious grammatical rules, and does not require tedious drill. It does not occur overnight, however. Real language acquisition develops slowly, and speaking skills emerge significantly later than listening skills, even when conditions are perfect. The best methods are therefore those that supply 'comprehensible input' in low anxiety situations, containing messages that students really want to hear. These methods do not force early production in the second language, but allow students to produce when they are 'ready,' recognizing that improvement comes from supplying communicative and comprehensible input, and not from forcing and correcting production (p. 6-7)

In fact, Krashen's model consists of five hypotheses. The Acquisition-Learning Distinction Hypothesis states that adults have two different ways to develop competence in a language, viz. language acquisition and language learning. Language acquisition is a subconscious process like that of a child learning his L1. Language acquirers are not consciously aware of the grammatical rules of the language, but rather develop a "feel" for correctness. "In a non-technical language, acquisition is 'picking-up' a language." Language learning, on the other hand, refers to the "conscious knowledge of a second language, knowing the rules, being aware of them, and being able to talk about them." Moreover, in the Natural Order hypothesis, Krashen claims that "the acquisition of grammatical structures proceeds in a predictable order." For a given language, some grammatical structures tend to be acquired early, others late, regardless of the L1. In the Monitor hypothesis, however, Krashen states that the language that one has subconsciously acquired initiates learners' utterances in a LA and is responsible for their fluency whereas the language that learners have consciously learned acts as an editor in situations where the learner has enough time to edit, is focused on form, and knows the rule, such as a grammar test in a language classroom or when carefully writing a composition.

As has been stated somewhere else above, Krashen' input hypothesis answers the question of how a language acquirer develops competence over time. It states that a language acquirer who is at "level i" must receive comprehensible input that is at "level i+1." Krashen's last hypothesis of the model is the *Affective Filter Hypothesis*, stating that a number of 'affective variables' play a facilitative role in SLA. These variables include: motivation, self-confidence and anxiety. Krashen claims that learners with high motivation, self-confidence, a

good self-image, and a low level of anxiety are better equipped for success in SLA and vice versa. In other words, when the filter is 'up,' it impedes language acquisition whereas when it is 'down' learners succeed in their acquisition.
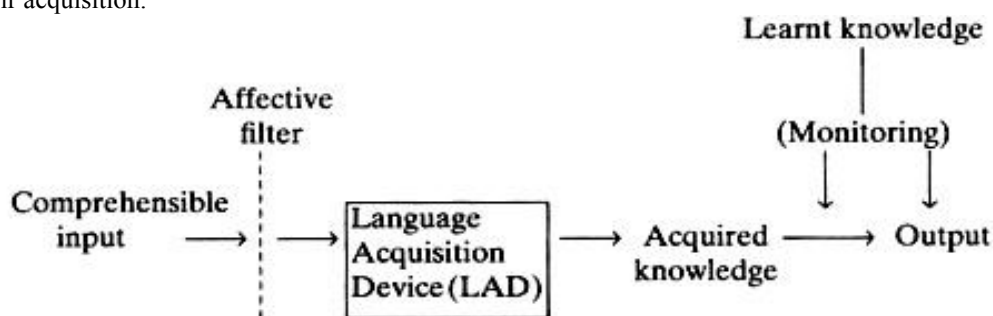

Figure2: Krashen's SLA Model, based on (Krashen, 1982, p. 16-32)

5. One Theory or Many
As has been stated above, LA process studies lead to disagreement among researchers and those interested in the issue more than agreement. However, I completely agree with those who consider LA in its two spheres the same process (e.g. Long, 1983; Ellis, 1997; Dulay *et al*, 1982). I disagree, however, with those who see L1 and L2 acquisition as two different processes. It is a fact that both processes result in a linguistic system which is both competence-based and performance-based. In the case of L1 acquisition, for instance, children know tacitly, innately and implicitly their L1s (i.e. competence), and they use such knowledge in different daily life situations (performance). The same thing is true regarding L2 acquisition. As a process, L2 acquisition results in a linguistic system manifesting itself in both levels. When an L2 learner makes a mistake or even an error, it does not mean that he does not have the same competence, specifically beginning and intermediate learners. It, however, means that he is still passing through stages in his acquisition process like children when internalizing their L1 linguistic system and making errors such as *I goed*. Children are also more even persistent and resistant to correction, as has been seen above, than adults. If this not so, how is it that children utter expressions like the one above and as they get older, they correct themselves? The reason is that children at this stage may not have passed through sufficient linguistic input, on the one hand, and probably they do not get such a kind of guidance (linguistic guidance from parents or someone else) that leads them to master the structure concerned, which is to a great extent similar to adults in their early acquisition stages. Moreover, in both cases performance is never a perfect mirror to competence. Further, a child's competence is tacit and implicit and the same thing is true in the case of adults, particularly advanced learners. In addition, adults perhaps surpass children in that their competence, in addition to being tacit, is explicit. *Explicit* in the sense that they (adults) know the language and know about language. In other words, if you ask a child *Why do you say an expression as such?* He will not be able to tell you so and so, i.e. he has no justification for why he utters it as such, which is not the case with adults. Thus, I claim that what really matters is how much adults are attended to the linguistic input they are probably exposed to, how much they are motivated to learn and master L2, etc.. It is true that adults get fossilized but not all of them (Shormani, 2013b). There are many examples of L2 learners who have native or native-like competence, and there are many examples of native speakers who are not perfect in their L1, and the reasons could be several for each case.

Thus, based on such views, I claim that a theory of language acquisition should involve and focus on complementarity between mentalism and behaviorism attributing equal portion to each's factors. In other words, an adequate approach to language acquisition, to me, should be based on both theories. Regarding the former, it is true that UG is "instilled" in every human's brain and without it no acquisition takes place. A piece of evidence for this is a child born with Down syndrome. This child cannot acquire language though fully exposed to environment. In the case of left hemisphere damage, children appear to be more flexible than adults. Some researchers (e.g. Lenneberg, 1967; Ellis, 1997) provide reasons of such flexibility arguing that children's brains are more plastic than adults. In other words, if a child's left hemisphere gets damaged, he can acquire or recover language but adults cannot, and if the latter pass through the same experience, the result is permanent aphasia. Another example is manifested in those who get some damage to the left hemisphere resulting in language loss among other disorders. However, as far as behaviorism is concerned, no one could deny the role played by environment and its factors in shaping language, and Genie and Isabelle are just an example. Genie, for instance, has been discovered at the age of thirteen or so in the forest. In spite of the extensive language program she has been subjected to, she hardly acquires words but not syntax. Cases exemplifying the roles played by both

theories put us vis-à-vis many facts of the nature of language acquisition process. In other words, considering the roles played by UG properties and those of environment requires us to assign equal role to each theory and doing so, I claim, would account fairly enough for how language is acquired, be it L1 or L2. Thus, if nature (i.e. UG) provides children with principles and parameters, and if the former are universal, and the latter are language-specific, nurture (i.e. environment) must be there to activate the former and trigger the latter. In fact, the theory I am claiming needs further studies and research, and I leave this to future research.

6. Conclusion

In this paper, I have provided a theoretical perspective of the nature of LA in its both spheres, i.e. L1 and L2 acquisition, a phenomenon that has attracted much of theoretical and applied linguists and LA researchers' interests. I have shown how such scholars are not in consensus regarding such an issue. Nor is there any agreement among them on the theories and/or models that try to account for such a phenomenon. I have shown how the two most influential and controversial theories, namely, behaviorism and mentalism account for such phenomena and how each alone fails to account for both. The way L2 acquisition has been modelized has been presented in two most influential models, namely, Ellis's (1993) and Krashen's (1982) based on each's view regarding the similarity and difference between L1 and L2 acquisition. In the course of this paper, I have maintained that there is no difference between L1 and L2 acquisition since both result in a linguistic system assuming that some L2 learners, specifically adults, do not reach native or native-like competence because they get fossilized and their fossilization can be ascribed to different linguistic and nonlinguistic factors. Based on this view, I maintain that a theory based on a complementarity between both mentalism and behaviorism can be proposed and utilized. This is so because the former provides well-established foundations for the latter, and I leave this for future research.

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