

The student who comes into connection with a foreign language will find some features of it quite easy and others extremely difficult. Those elements that are similar to his native language will be simple for him, and those elements that are different will be difficult.

(Lado 1957:2)

- With the development of the modern society more and more people are eager to study foreign languages. It is almost impossible to exist nowadays without a good command of at least one additional language.
- Here I can't help mentioning the process of **globalization** which provided many opportunities for the people of different countries to get acquainted with the world on a wider scale. At the same time it made them acquire the additional linguistic knowledge in order to use the information they have received.

- SLA is not a predictable phenomenon. It is a mixture of different factors which combine the learner and the learning situation.

What is Second Language Acquisition? It is the process when people learn the second language additionally to their native one. This term describes the acquisition of any foreign language after the acquisition of the mother tongue.

- The adults do not simply “pick up” the language. The process of acquisition requires intense memorization and study in order to become proficient.
- The SLA is closely connected with **Universal Grammar**. A number of studies have showed that the process of obtaining the second language conforms to UG at all stages of development. Language acquisition device is accessible to learners of a second language. But it is helpful only at a certain age.

- It means that youngsters will be more efficient in getting the access to the target language than older learners.

Why do some learners do better than others?



- . According to **Chomsky**, language is a complex structure with some levels of representation and there are certain principles of the language restriction. Our grammar allows us to produce the endless quantity of sentences. If children only imitated the given examples, they could never produce so many utterances and develop so fast. Children have the innate principles which help them to make the definite conclusions about the grammar. Chomsky assumes that without this innate ability of language humans won't be able to learn complete speech patterns, because they are very rare in the environment.

Many scientists, for example Catherine Snow, debate that children get the evidence they need from the interaction with their parents. She claims, that communication with the parents plays the most essential role in the language acquisition process, that's why the "baby talk" should be slow, repetitive and clear. Children often pay scarce attention to what they are told to say, instead of sticking to their own ungrammatical preferences.

- We do not know how rich our genetic inheritance is. But evidently, children will not be able to produce complex and almost correct sentences without the natural feeling of the language. No matter where they live, what status their family has – all children develop the language skills adequately.
- UG is responsible for the process of acquisition but without a proper surrounding the process will not be successful. In this case we may observe a real interconnection of the arguments, which cannot exist without the equal background.

- Different people get L2 in different ways. There are some reasons why it happens. We may mention age, learning style, motivation. All these factors influence the process of the acquisition.
- Second language acquisition may be more difficult for some people due to certain social factors. For example, numerous studies have shown that extraverts (or unreserved and outgoing people) acquire a second language better than introverts

Is there any connection between the Universal grammar and SLA?

According to the Universal Grammar (UG) hypothesis, all human languages are similar to some extent. Chomsky adopts the UG hypothesis in order to explain that children acquire their first language seemingly without effort, although the language system is quite complex. His theory makes crucial use of the fact that UG should be powerful enough to enable the child to acquire a first language and at the same time flexible enough to account for all different human languages.

- It means that for a child the process of acquiring the second language shouldn't be painful and complicated. He should set the values of the UG parameters relevant for the target language on the basis of positive evidence;
- All languages are governed by UG, but children have fewer difficulties than the older learners who get the rules from positive input mainly.

- There are several hypotheses concerning SLA. They are: output hypothesis, Krashen's Monitor theory, Critical Period Hypothesis and some others. I would like to draw attention to the **Critical Period Hypothesis**.
- I would like to draw attention to the **Critical Period Hypothesis**. It states that the first few years of life are crucial in acquisition of the language if presented with adequate stimuli. If the person doesn't achieve the definite level of the language input during this time, he will not be able to possess the full command of it.

One of the vivid examples of Critical Period Hypothesis is Genie who is sometimes called “A wild child”. Her father isolated her from the society and when she was found the girl was thirteen already, completely having no command of the language. The scientists stated that she never managed to acquire the language completely, though the level of this acquisition may be disputed.



- Speaking about SLA, it's possible to assume that children have more opportunities to master the language than the adult learners. Though some researchers argue that despite the critical period grown-up people can learn a second language perfectly.
- That's the question of the language aptitude being opposed to the critical period. Still, the majority of the adult learners can't achieve the fluency children display. In the majority of cases they face the difficulties with the pronunciation, failing to imitate the native speakers' level of production.

□ A group of Chinese and Korean speakers, who had acquired English as a second language, was tested. They were asked to judge the grammaticality of the following sentences:

The little boy is speak to a policeman.

The farmer bought two pig.

A bat flewed into our attic last night.

The researchers found that the results of the test depended heavily on the age at which the person had arrived in the USA. Those people who arrived as children (the approximate age between three and eight) did as well as American native speakers. Those ones who had arrived between the ages of eight and fifteen did not perform successfully. And it was assumed that each year seemed to make a difference for this group. The worst results were displayed by the group that arrived between the ages of seventeen and thirty-one

It is possible to assume that there are definite “sensitive periods” for the nativelike mastery of L2. For example, the shortest sensitive period is for phonology. Other aspects, such as syntax, may have a larger window. Recently much attention has been paid to “heritage language” learners. There has been conducted a research which dealt with college students who had overheard the language being children, but neither spoke nor understood it. Then they were compared to people who had no exposure to the language before the age of fourteen.



- “Overhears” acquired a nativelike accent while the other students did not, but they failed in acquiring the grammatical morphemes. It means that early exposure may leave an “imprint” which facilitates the acquisition of certain aspects of language.
- There are, however, problems with the connection of the UG theory to SLA: L2 learners go through several phases of types of utterance that are not similar to their L1 or the L2 they hear.

Other factors include the cognitive maturity of most L2 learners, that they have different motivation for learning the language, and already speak one language fluently. With the exception of some remarkable individuals, adult second-language learners usually have an accent and may make a great number of syntactic and morphological mistakes which are not typical for children acquiring L2.

