Myths On Second Language Acquisition and Learning: A Closer Look

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Abstract— This paper examines and rebuts eight common myths about second language acquisition and learning. Myth 1 challenges the idea that children learn languages more easily than adults. Myth 2 disputes the notion that true bilinguals must speak two languages perfectly. Myth 3 argues that language cannot be acquired solely through listening or reading. Myth 4 contends that practice alone does not make perfect in language learning. Myth 5 posits that students learn best through real-world interactions, not just classroom instruction. Myth 6 states that constant error correction can be counterproductive. Myth 7 disputes the idea that individual differences are the most important factor in acquisition. Finally, Myth 8 argues that grammar mastery alone is insufficient for full language acquisition. Throughout the paper, relevant language acquisition theories and classroom scenarios are utilized to systematically disprove each myth. The goal is to clarify misconceptions and provide a more nuanced understanding of second language acquisition and learning.

Keywords— Myths, Second language acquisition, Learning theories, Classroom learning, Language mastery, Misconceptions

INTRODUCTION

Second language acquisition and learning are controversial topics that motivate scholars and experts in the field to conduct studies/research that would clarify concepts and theories related to it. If one will make a thorough study of the articles reports, and reviews about it, he/she will surely be familiar with fallacies that have been accepted and believed by many. These have become part of the system and belief that are quite difficult to change or transform, that is why a careful examination and clear explanation is needed. Thus, this paper intends to prove that there are numerous misconceptions about SLA and learning and the author will elaborate systematically these errors based on learning scenarios and language theories.

Myth 1: Children Learn Languages Quickly and Easily While Adults Are Ineffective in Comparison

This myth is explained in the article written by Malone (n.d) in his article, Young Children vs Adult Learning a Second Language, stating that all people can acquire a second language no matter their age This is supported by her justification that there are distinct differences on the brain processes of adult and child, quantity of their vocabulary, their pronunciation ability, aging and learning and their learning methods. Her discussion of the cited reasons is apparent in classroom setting wherein learners who vary in age have different levels in language acquisition and learning. Students who are matured enough can learn the language faster and easier compared to those of younger age. On the contrary.

younger learners in the classroom can be better than the older ones in other aspects such as pronunciation and introduction of new words. The cognitive theory of Paget can be applied here because of the notion that one should understand the concept before he/she can acquire the language So, both children and adult can be effective or ineffective in learning the language because the basis depends on how they learn the concept.

Myth 2: A True Bilingual Is Someone Who Speaks Two Languages Perfectly, Zeroes in on This, Flawed Definition of a Bilingual

This second misconception simply means that for someone to be called bilingual, he/she should be both flawless in the different macro skills in the two languages. This view is contradicted by an online article, what is bilingualism? asserting that bilinguals don't speak both languages equally well because they use each language in different circumstances, events, and areas.

This idea damaged bilinguals' confidence in using the languages thinking that they are less proficient in any of the two languages. Students in the classroom experience this dilemma, reasoning out that they are not good in English, and their grammar is not perfect.

However, they can still be called bilinguals for Filipino is the native language used at home and English is their second language taught and used in the school.

Myth 3: You can Acquire Language Simply Through Listening or Reading

Learners have unlike learning styles. Some are visuals auditory, tactile, etc. Therefore. the given statement will not suit all types of leaners and is not true to all. Although a learner may learn/acquire language through listening and reading the problem that may rise is on the quality of the language he has. Genuine language learning may be seen on how speakers use the language appropriately in different perspective and condition. This explanation is reinforced by the study of Newport (1990) which is cited by Wickam (2014) that psychological and social factors have more of an impact on second language learning. In this situation, the teacher's role is to create and incorporate different instructional activities to diverse group of learners. The zone of proximal development of Vygotsky plays an important role in the learning process.

Myth 4: Practice Makes Perfect

This common saying can be applied to activities requiring an individual to repeatedly perform the task thereby. identifying which part or phase of the process should be prepared and be given emphasis the next time it is executed. Nevertheless, this statement cannot be applied to language acquisition for there are other aspects that entail careful study so that an individual would master the language. Yes, it is acceptable that one can acquire a language if he/she is contained in a place where certain language is used. However, proficiency is at stake if the speakers of that certain language would not be aware and conscious of the correct structure of a language. In this case, perfection cannot be attained if there is no actual learning of the components of language such as the semantic and lexical aspects. The Acquisition-Learning Hypothesis of Krashen strengthens the need for a conscious process that results in knowing about the rules of language. The learned competence (LC) makes correction and is responsible in analyzing grammar rules consciously and practicing them through exercises.

Myth 5: Language Students Learn (and Retain) What They Are Taught

This misconception regarding language acquisition focuses NOT on the formal way of learning the language but on the impact of the environment There are cases in which learners learn language and its meaning when they hear or use it in actual communicative setting. What students learn in school are concepts that can be vague and confusing, however when they encounter the same concept in real scenarios that's the time they internalized and understood the concept. This self-discovery method is evident in concrete example when students came across the word, intertextuality. This term may not be retained in their minds, yet they may understand and recall its meaning through their interaction with people whom they met and that makes them understood what really it was. The Discourse Theory of Language Acquisition can be set as foundation to this reason in which students in a communicative class are anticipated to learn by doing and expected to acquire the language through the PPP (presentation, practice, and production) principle.

Myth 6: Language Learners Always Benefit Prom Correction

Not all language learners learn from Constant giving of correction because in this manner, they will at some point be frustrated and the tendency is to withdraw and never attempt to use the language. Too much correcting them would result in low self-esteem thereby refusing to try learning the new language. This myth does not conform with The Affective. -Filter Hypothesis by Krashen explaining that the learner's emotional state is just like an adjustable filter. Language input must be achieved in low-anxiety context since acquirers with a low-affective filter receive more input and interact with confidence. Self-confidence, motivation, and anxiety state are factors developed in affective filter.

Myth 7: Individual Differences Are Major, Perhaps the Major, Factor in Second Language Acquisition

This myth is unlikely to believe in because individual differences have nothing to do with SLA. Individuality can be considered as a factor but not a major reason for language acquisition.

Every learner who is trying to acquire the language can be successful if given enough and appropriate guidance, training, and even time The profile of the learner is not the basis of his chance to acquire the language rather it is his capacity to use the second language and his interaction to the environment.

These details are supported by the doctrine of Empiricism, stating that language acquisition is done through experiences and contact of an individual to a situation he is in. Cognitive theory of Piaget can also be applied because the learner's readiness in acquiring language and understanding meanings are given emphasis.

Myth 8: Language Acquisition is the Individual Acquisition of Grammar

This statement is too far believable because mastering grammar cannot suffice the entre process of language acquisition. There are theorists who confide on the importance of mastering the language structure to acquire the language however, there are other points to be included not only grammar. If one understands the Speech Act Theory, he/she will come to realize that not only the prepositional meaning (literal meaning of the utterance conveyed by the particular words or structures) of the utterance is necessary but also the illocutionary meaning (effect the spoken or written test has to the listeners or readers).

With all the given points, arguments, and theories cite above those myths remain as such for they do not totally conform with any concepts accepted and considered in language acquisition. Even in language-learning scenarios, those 8 fallacies are not observable nor existing since classroom-based learning is a genuine conglomeration of all the theories before a learner master the language.

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