

Second Language Adjectives Acquisition

Inst: Waad Maray Hasan

1. Introduction

Aronoff and Rees-Miller(2003:295)discuss that English language is a natural phenomenon, composing of an essential component of every human society. So ,linguistics is concerned with studying language and language in general. Bolinger (1976: 236) says that "Language is not only necessary for the formulation of thought but it is part of the thinking process itself." cited in Broughton et al(1980: 27). Carter and Nunan (2001: 34) describe that "the term of grammar is used to refer both to language users' subconscious internal system and to linguist's' attempts explicitly to codify – or describe –that system" .

Consequently, Richards and Renandya(2002:158)say that acquisition "refers to the process by which the learner incorporates a new learning item into his or her developing system or interlanguage". In short, second language acquisition(SLA) is a systematic process to use target language. Krashen's theory believes that acquisition and learning processes are two different ideas. Krashen says there are two different processes for internalizing second language learning, namely: 'conscious process' for acquisition and 'subconscious process' for learning. So, the idea of acquisition is "a subconscious and intuitive process of constructing the system of a language , not unlike the process used by a child to pick up a language ".While conscious process means "learning process in which learners attend to form ,figure out rules ,and are generally aware of their own process". Cited in Brown (2000:277-278).

However, learners of English as a foreign language have the ability to produce an infinite number of sentences. Thus, some grammar rules are fairly straightforward, others are horribly complex. Consequently, adjectives(adj) are grammatical words which are used to describe a verb, a noun..etc. English learners are unaware and face difficulties in comprehending and using morphological, syntactic ,and semantic function of adjectives. Most of recent studies have been concerned with other part of speech such as verb or noun though. So, there is a required study to focus on the significance and complexity of adjectives.

Alexander(1988:108) visualizes that English learners have many problems in the use of adjectives. They do not vary in form to agree with nouns .They often precede nouns when used attributively,i.e. misplacement of adjective. Some adjectives seem to be confused for most learners. Parrott(2000:18)discusses that adjectives as "describing words" are unfamiliar with usual sequence of adjectives for most learners. These result from ungrammatical ordering of two or more adjective ,and deciding what word or combinations of words learners manipulate to directly before or after adjective. English learners are inefficient and make errors in understanding and producing English adjectives. In this respect, adjectives are very essential part of English language acquisition. Adjectives are important not only for English learners but also for English teachers, textbook writers, and grammarians to be aware of the value of use and usage of adjective.

2. The Notion of Adjectives

Shaw (1986:17-18)defines an adjective as a part of speech which is used to modify ,to describe a noun or a pronoun. That is to say, the purpose behind using adjective is to specify the exact meaning of another word. Alexander(1988:106)points out that an

adjective manipulates to give descriptive information and many adjectives can answer the question "What....like?"and depending on context. Gramley and Patzold(1992:132) characterize that adjectives are an open class with numerous semantic sub-groups. Whereas, Trask (1993:7)describes that adjective is a lexical category or lexical item which is inflectionally and distributionally different from other parts of speech such as a noun or a verb which typically shares the characteristics of being an open class and has real semantic content. Adjective is used to express permanent or temporary attributes.

2.1 Characteristics of Adjectives

Biber et al(2000:64)state that adjectives have the following distinguished characteristics:

1-Morphological characteristics: many adjectives can be inflected for comparison :

e.g. cold, colder, coldest.

Sometimes adjectives are complex. Look at these examples of compound derived adjectives:

e.g. Colour-blind

e.g. home-made

e.g. ice-cold....

Many adjectives are derived from ed-participles, and ing-participle. Look at this examples:

e.g. Surprised

e.g. interesting.....

However, Greenbaum and Nelson(2002:95) state that there are a large number of suffixes are added to nouns and verbs to make

adjectives. Here are the most common suffixes and words that exemplify them:

<i>-able, -ible</i>	<i>disposable, suitable, fashionable, audible</i>
<i>-al, -ial</i>	<i>normal, cynical, racial, editorial</i>
<i>-ed</i>	<i>wooded, boarded, wretched, crooked</i>
<i>-ful</i>	<i>hopeful, playful, careful, forgetful</i>
<i>-ic</i>	<i>romantic, atmospheric, heroic, atomic</i>
<i>-ical</i>	<i>historical, political, paradoxical,</i>
<i>economical</i>	
<i>-ish</i>	<i>amateurish, darkish, foolish, childish</i>
<i>-ive, -ative</i>	<i>defective, communicative, attractive,</i>
<i>affirmative</i>	
<i>-less</i>	<i>tactless, hopeless, harmless, restless</i>
<i>-ous, -eous, -ious</i>	<i>famous, virtuous, erroneous, spacious</i>
<i>-y</i>	<i>tasty, handy, wealthy, windy</i>

2-Syntactic characteristics: adjectives can occur as the head in adjective phrase. For examples:

e.g. very clever, difficult to answer

Adjective phrases are typically used to as premodifiers in noun phrases and as predicators in clauses.

3-Semantic characteristics: it is clear that adjectives are used to describe, specify ,modify qualities of people, things, and states of affairs. For example:

e.g. a beautiful mobile-phone.

Many adjectives serve to as classifiers. For example :

e.g. Criminal law

While other adjectives have an identifying or intensifying meaning, which are often non-gradable and non-predicating. Examples:

e.g. Lovely parrot.

e.g. red flower.

2.2 Syntactic Classification Of Adjectives

Quirk and Greenbaum(1973:115)state that there are two main syntactic functions of adjectives:

1- Attributive: when they premodify nouns, i.e. occur between the determiner and the head of the noun phrase. For examples:

e.g. the new car .

e.g. her beautiful handbag.

2-Predicative: adjectives can be:

a)subject complement:

e.g. her brother is brave.

b)object complement:

e.g. they keep the house clean and nice.

2.2.1 Syntactic Subclassification Of Adjectives

Quirk and Greenbaum(1973:121)explain that adjectives can be classified according whether they can operate as:

1-both attitude and predicative,

e. g. a young man ,the man is young.

These are considered the central adjective.

2-Predicative only,

e.g. a loath woman , the woman is loath to admit it.

2.3 Order Of Adjectives (semantic placement)

Quirk and greenbaum(1973:125)say that there are a number of semantic set which are introduced to explain the normal orders of adjectives and for their co-occurrences:

1-intensifying adjectives, e.g.: a real story ,a beautiful car.

2-Postdeterminers, and limiters adjectives ,e.g.: the second student, the first winner.

3-general adjectives susceptible to subjective meaning, e.g. : careful naughty ,lovely.

4-general adjectives susceptible to objective measure, including those indicating size or shape, e.g. : wealthy, large, square

5-adjectives indicating age, e.g. : young, old, new....

6-denominal adjectives indicating colour, e.g. : white, green, black..

7-denominal adjectives indicating material , e.g. : a woolen scarf, a metallic substance, indicating resemblance to a material, e.g. : metallic voice, silken hair, cat-like stealth.

8-denominal adjectives indicating province or style, e.g. : a British car, a Greek woman...

2.4 Form and use of adjectives

Alexander(1988:107)explains that an adjective never varies in form whether it refers to people or things ..etc in singular or plural is :

Singular:

A tall man Bob is tall. He is tall. He is a tall man.

A tall woman Marry is tall. She is tall. She is a tall woman.

A tall horse. That horse is tall. It is tall. It is a tall horse.

A tall tree that tree is tall. It is tall. It is a tall tree.

Plural:

Tall men Bob and Jim are tall. They are tall. They are tall men.

Tall women Mary and Ann are tall. They are tall. They are tall women.

Tall people Bob and Ann are tall. They are tall. They are tall people.

Tall horses These horses are tall. They are tall. They are tall horses

Tall trees Those trees are tall. They are tall. They are tall trees.

2.5 Adjectives in Phrases

It is clear that English forms do not only contain sequences of words put together instead, they can be broken down into units(constituents),which can be analyzed hierarchically into successively smaller units. So, Finch(2005:106)defines phrase as "a syntactic unit that typically consists of more than one word ,and is intermediate between word and clause level in sentences". Biber et al (2000:101)state that adjective phrases contain an adjective as head, optionally accompanied by modifiers in the form of single words, phrases, and clauses. While Greenbaum and Nelson(2002:68)discuss that there are major possible function of adjective phrases:

1-Pre-modifier in a noun phrases:

e.g. I loved that old green sofa with the lovely round seats and the big soft cushions. Yule(2006:111)

2-Subject complement:

e.g. The weather was very bad.

3-Object complement:

e.g. My sister keeps her room very tidy.
al(2001:17)

Leech et

4-Post-modifier in a noun(phrase).

e.g. The machines involved.

e.g. ten years old.

3. The Notion of 'Acquisition' in Second Language

Ellis(1997:11)describes acquisition as "whether the learner manifests patterns of language use that are more or less the same as native speakers of the target language." Stranzny (2005:5)explains that acquisition is used to different aspects of the process and results of learning a L2. According to sociolinguistic views , acquisition as well-designed knowledge takes place in classroom. Likewise; psychologistic opinions such as Krashen discover differences between acquisition and learning .As we stated, acquisition means subconscious process of learning a language while learning means conscious process of mastering or controlling a language which occurs as a result of studying, and finally, linguistic perspective such as Chomsky characterizes two processes which are a result of SLA: competence and performance. Corder (1973:90)identifies that the differences between competence and performance are: competence concerns with what the speaker of a language knows implicitly while performance is what he does and uses. Arnoff and Reese-Miller(2003:326)define competence and performance that competence refers to a native speaker's knowledge of his or her native language ,and performance is how speaker puts that knowledge to use on certain occasions. Cook and Newson (1996:22)explain the distinction between competence and performance that Competence is "the speaker/hearer's knowledge of

his language", while performance is "the actual use of language in concrete situations"

3.1 Processes of SLA

Nunan and Carter (2001:87) describe the SLA is the process through which learners use one or more of foreign languages. Acquisition occurs in naturalistic context where English learners produce the language informally through interacting in language , and in the classroom sitting .Thus, Ellis (1997:35) ensures that his model of L2 acquisition as: Input, Intake, and Output. Richards and Renandya(2002:157)clarify that input means all language sources that are manipulated to start the language process including text-books, commercial material, teacher-made material.....etc.

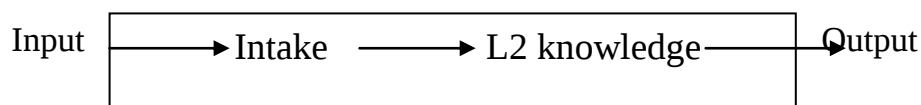


Figure (1) Ellis' Model(1997:35) of L2 Acquisition

In this respect, Krashen(1981:100)declares in his 'Input Hypothesis' as "an important condition for language acquisition to occur is that the acquirer understand(via hearing or reading) input language that involves structure 'a bit beyond' his or her current level of competence..."That is to say, if acquirer is at stage i , the input he or she understands should contain $i+1$...etc cited in Brown(2000:278). Stranzny (2005:6)characterizes that input is one of the main factor that affect learner's acquisition. It means the learner's access and exposure to L2 including written and oral. The word exposure means here English learners engage in interaction as well as listen to tapes, films, and TV program. After comprehending input, it is necessary to focus on intake. Ibid(2002:158) states that Intake involves the linguistic " data". That is to say, there is portion

of the input to remain in long-term memory and form the data on which the processes of language acquisition are engaged. However, there are some factors which affect the transference of items from input to intake:

- 1-complexity: item should be at an appropriate level of difficulties.
- 2-saliency: items must be noticed or attended to in some way.
- 3-frequency: items must be experienced with sufficient frequency.
- 4-need: the item must fulfil a communicative need.

Ibid(1997:35)explains that taking short and long term memory of L2.Now,knowledge is manipulated by learner to produce spoken and written output what is called "learner language".

3.2 The Relationship of Grammar to Cognition

Kristtiansen et al(2006:83)explain that cognitive grammar deals with the descriptive and the generative definitions of grammar where grammar can be defined as a structured inventory of conventional linguistic units which is also known as the symbolic alternative(to traditional/structural/generative grammar)because any linguistic expression is an association between a semantic and a phonological structure .

Evans and Green(2006:114) explain that langack's model of cognitive grammar is an experiment to comprehend language not as an outcome of a specialized language module, but as a result of general cognitive mechanisms and processes .He adds grammar consists of an inventory units that are well-formed pairing: morphemes , words, and grammatical constructions. These units compose of properties of sounds , meaning, and grammar, writing single representation which Leads to the term symbolic assemblies .

Arnoff and Rees-Miller(2001:299-300) affirm that a particular generative grammar is a theory dealt with state of mind. What is more, Chomsky has discussed a rich theory of universal grammar which is very important to explain the possibility of language acquisition. Human controls a language with little explicit instruction. Humans are genetically endowed with "mental organ" which adopted to acquire language and this leads to the term" argument from the poverty of stimulus".

Lepore and smith (2006:127) ensure that Chomsky describes 'I –language'(where 'I' stands for 'internal' and individual)and he contrasts it with a conception that he labels 'E-language(where 'E' stands for external').In sum, a universal grammar is a theory which reflects language acquisition is a result of the development and maturation of language system in brain.

3.3 Communicative Grammar for Acquiring English Adjectives

Nunan (2004:212) describes that Communicative language teaching(CLT) is "a philosophical approach to language teaching covering a range of methodological approaches which share a focus on helping learners communicate meaningfully in the target language". Harmer(2002:84-85) affirms that CLT is focused on the significance of language functions. The main principle is to train learners to perform language forms suitably in a different context and different aims. Language learning requires plentiful exposure to language in use and plenty of opportunities to use it are majorly significant for learner's development of knowledge and skill. Activities in CLT typically involve students in real communication where accuracy of language they use is less important than successful achievement of communicative task they are performing. Brumfit and Jonson (1979:117) point out that "language items are presented in situations in the classroom to

ensure that their meaning is clear, and then practised as formal structures by means of exercises of sufficient variety to sustain the interest of the learner". Learners of English must not be taught isolated forms but those forms must be integrated with language use. Thus, we can say that language is acquired only through constant conversational process in situation similar to real life (Rojas,2012:176).

3.4 The Effect Of Context In Learning Adjective

It is clear that context is an important factor in the interpretation of utterances and expressions. Matsumoto(2009:132)clarifies that context effect is the influence of the physical, emotional, or social, environment on organism's reaction to a certain action. Candlin and Mercer(2001:192) affirm that grammar is sometimes presented out of context. Learner of English as foreign language are introduced with isolated sentences, which supply English learners with formal, and detective mastery. Consequently, it demands to provide learners opportunities to explore grammatical structures in context, to be able to use language for communication. Learners are denied the opportunities of recognizing the systematic connections which occur between form, meaning, and, use. It is also necessary to help English learners to give them tasks which dramatize the discoursal context. Cruse(2006:35) mentions that the most important characteristics of context are:

- 1-preceding and following utterances and expressions('co-context')
- 2-the immediate physical situation
- 3-the wider situation, including social and power relations
- 4-knowledge presumed shared between speaker and hearer.

Gender and Zoltan(2001:4-5) also point out that context of utterances is a wide and heterogeneous collection of facts including linguistic and non-linguistic environment of a certain use an expression. An expression is context-dependent if and only if it can have different contents when uttered in different contexts. A context-dependent complex expression none of whose constituents are context-dependent would compositionality of content.

3.5 The Effect Of Transfer to Second Language Acquisition

Arnoff and Rees-Miller(2001:497) explain that transfer from the first language(L1) to the second language(L2) includes two processes: use and acquisition .It influences on the both processes of learning over systematic relationships between languages. First, language transfer has the conveying the aspect of the first language writing system over to the second language.

Carter and Nunan (2001:87) discuss that studies of similarities and differences between languages were conducted in the belief that L1 has an important effect on the L2,resulting from the 'contrastive analysis'(CA) hypothesis. In this respect, errors are usually appeared in the interference between L1 and L2.Moreover; there are two types of transfer: Positive and negative transfer. Positive transfer occurs when the rules of L1 are similar to L2.While negative transfer occur when the rules of L1 are dissimilar to the rules of L2.That is to say, both are different.

Brown (2002:207-208) ensures that behaviourists and structuralists introduced 'Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis' which offered the main principal barrier to L2 acquisition is the influence of the L1 system with L2 system. By the same time, it would produce a taxonomy of linguistic contrasts between them and would enable the linguist to predict the difficulties that English learners would face.

3.6 Second Language and Task-Based Instruction

Richards and Renandya(2002:153) clarify that task-based approaches to teaching English is very important because they include the use of tasks which connect English learners in meaningful interaction and negotiation. Learners' grammar needs are identified on the basis of task performance rather than through a predetermined grammar syllabus. Breen(1987:23) defines a pedagogical task as:

".....any structured language learning endeavour which has a particular objective, appropriate content, a specified working procedure, and a range of outcomes for those who undertake the task. 'Task' is therefore assumed to refer to a range of workplans which have the over all purposes of facilitating language learning – from the simple and brief exercise type, to more complex and lengthy activities such as group problem- solving or simulations and decision making".

Cited in

Nunan(2004:3).

Richard and Schmidt (2002:539-540) describe task as activities which is shaped to manipulate a certain learning goal. A number of dimensions tasks influence their use in language teaching. These include:

- 1-goal:the type of goals teachers and learners identify for task.
- 2-procedures:the operations and procedures learner perform to complete a task.
- 3-order:the location of a task within a sequence of other tasks.
- 4-pacing: the amount of time that is spent on a task
- 5-product: the outcomes student produce.
- 6-learning strategy: the type of strategy a student manipulate.
- 7-assessment: how success on the task will be achieved

8-participation: whether the task is completed with individual or a group learners.

3.7 Addressing Adjective Within Task Work

It is clear that learning and teaching process can be addressed at the stages of Input, Intake, Acquisition, Access or Output. However, Skehan(1996,1996) states the following principles for communicative teaching:

- 1-Exposure to language at an appropriate level of difficulty
- 2-Engagement in meaning-focused interaction in language.
- 3-Opportunities for learners to notice or attend to linguistic form while using language.
- 4-Opportunities to expand the language resources learners make use of(both lexical and syntactic)over time. Cited in Richards and Renandya (2002:160) .

4.Conclusions

Throughout discussing and explaining second language adjectives acquisition. We find :

- 1- An adjective as a part of speech is used to modify ,to describe a noun or thing. That is to say, the purpose behind using adjective is to specify the exact meaning of another word. Learners of English are inefficient in comprehending and using adjectives. Adjectives as a lexical category have two main syntactic classifications: attribute and predicative.
- 2- Adjectives as linguistic phenomena are very complex to be acquired because it is necessary to focus not only on adjectives as describing words, but also to focus on morphological, syntactic and semantic, and phonological function of adjectives.

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- 3- There are several semantic placements of adjective. Learners of English have to be so familiar with order of adjectives.
 - 4- Adjectives can be combined with longer units of English sentences to make adjectival phrases.
 - 5- There are great connection between acquisition as learning process, and understanding and using adjectives. That is to say, acquisition occurs when Learners of English manifest patterns of language use of adjective. Acquisition is conscious process of mastering English adjectives. Learners' competence and learners' performance play a great role for acquiring adjectives.
 - 6- This study reveals that learners of English require plentiful exposure to English adjectives in order to develop their knowledge and skill. Learners of English also must be integrated with language use of adjectives in context.

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