

# STUDENTS' ENGLISH PROFICIENCY IN SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

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## **STUDENTS' ENGLISH PROFICIENCY IN SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION** **(A Study of students' comprehension about Grammatical Morphemes in Context of The Natural Order Hypothesis)**

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### **Abstract**

This study aimed to know students' comprehension about grammatical morphemes in the context of a certain factor. The research method used was survey with descriptive analysis techniques. Yusuf (2008:1) describes the "Research survey meant as a way of making observations about the variables in which the indicator was the answer to the question, the answer given to the respondent either orally or in writing." Data analysis techniques from this brief study are as follows: (1) data have been obtained from informants either through direct interviews of non formal and recordings, as well as from the results of observations are recorded on a separate sheet, (2) data were obtained and classified based on aspects of the study, (3) to classify data according to the needs of research, (4) analyzing the research data in accordance with the actual situation based on the research objectives, (5) to formulate conclusions and prepared a report. The research findings; it was found that there were differences of English proficiency among students. Differences of English proficiency that they owned were caused by the affective factor i.e. anxious, lack self –confidence in their ability and poorly motivated.

Keywords: Students' English Proficiency, Second Language Acquisition.

### **Introduction**

#### *A. Background*

**Language**, a system of conventional spoken, manual (signed), or written symbols by means of which human beings, as members of a social group and participants in its culture, express themselves. The functions of language include communication, the expression of identity, play, imaginative expression, and emotional release (Crystal, 2021). Language is a instrument for humans to communicate. Humans cannot be separated from the process of using language in daily life. Language is used in every line of life to ease the process of communicating. In obtaining the language, it is through process, cold by Language Acquisition.

Language acquisition is a human process of acquiring the ability to capture, produce, and use the word for understanding and communication (Rosdiana, 2016). This capacity involves a wide range of capabilities such as syntax, phonetics, and vocabulary is extensive. It is a process that takes place in the brain of childhood when he obtained his first language or mother tongue. Language acquisition is usually distinguished by learning the language. The language can be obtained in form of vocal or manual language as in sign language. Language acquisition usually refers to first language acquisition that examines the acquisition of children to their mother tongue and it is not acquisition of second language that examines acquisition of the additional language by children or adults. Learning the language associated with the processes that occur at the time a child learn a second language after he obtained his first language.

Second language acquisition is not the same as the first language acquisition. In first language acquisition of students' departure from zero "(he has not mastered any language) and the development of language acquisition is in line with the mental and physical development. In second language acquisition, students had to master a first language well and the development of second language acquisition is in line with the mental and physical development.

Besides first language acquisition is done informally with a very high motivation (first language students need to be able to communicate with people around him), while the second language acquisition is done formally and motivation of students in general are not too high. Because a second language is not used to communicate daily in the student community.

Based on the mentioned case above, it is the problem that the students experience the fluctuated condition in acquisition of the second language, caused by factor x. Therefore, the researcher feels attracted to do a research with the title: STUDENTS' ENGLISH PROFICIENCY IN SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION (A Study of students' comprehension about Grammatical Morphemes in Context of The Natural Order Hypothesis).

Relation to this, the researcher undertakes a study of fifteen students from junior high school and as the research informant namely Majidi, S.pd. He is an English teacher at SMPN 2 Terara, east Lombok.

#### *B. The Statement of Problems*

Problems can be formulated as follows:

1. How are students' comprehension about the Grammatical Morphemes ?.
2. What are about students' comprehension for the Grammatical Morphemes in the context of factor x?.

#### *C. Objectives of Research*

Based on the statement of the problems above, The purposes of this research are:

1. To know students' comprehension about the Grammatical Morphemes .
2. To know students' comprehension about the Grammatical Morphemes in the context of factor x.

#### *D. Significances of Research*

The significances of this research:

1. In order that writer and readers can add experience and knowledge in researching students' comprehension about the Grammatical Morphemes in the context of factor x.
2. In order that other researchers can add experience, knowledge and develop this research from different perspectives.

#### *E. Focus*

This research will be limited only to the issue: Students' comprehension about the Grammatical Morphemes and students' comprehension about the Grammatical Morphemes in the context of factor x.

### **Review of Literature**

#### *A. Language Acquisition*

Language acquisition is nothing more or less than learning how to communicate, in other words, *communication* and *less on learning* through form (such as grammatical structures) (Indah, 2017). Language acquisition is the process by which humans acquire the capacity to perceive, produce and use words to understand and communicate (Ramlan, 2018). *Language acquisition* refers to the *process by which human beings, especially children, acquire the ability to perceive and comprehend language used by people of the language community, as well as produce and use the learned language to communicate with them* (Dai, 2014). This capacity involves the picking up of diverse capacities including syntax, phonetics, and an extensive vocabulary. This language might be vocal as with speech or manual as in sign. Language acquisition usually refers to first language acquisition, which studies infants' acquisition of their native language, rather than second language acquisition, which deals with acquisition (in both children and adults) of additional languages.

The capacity to acquire and use language is a key aspect that distinguishes humans from other organisms. While many forms of animal communication exist, they have a limited range of non-syntactically structured vocabulary tokens that lack cross cultural variation between groups.

A major concern in understanding language acquisition is how these capacities are picked up by infants from what appears to be very little input. A range of theories of language acquisition has been created in order to explain this apparent problem including innatism in which a child is born prepared in some manner with these capacities, as opposed to the other theories in which language is simply learned.

### B. Second Language Acquisition

Second language acquisition or second language learning is the process by which people learn a second language. It is a process of internalizing and making sense of a second language after one has an established first language (Suryantari, 2018). Second-language acquisition (often abbreviated to SLA) is also the name of the scientific discipline devoted to studying that process. Second language refers to any language learned in addition to a person's first language; although the concept is named second language acquisition, it can also incorporate the learning of third, fourth or subsequent languages. Second-language acquisition refers to what learners do; it does not refer to practices in language teaching.

The academic discipline of second-language acquisition is a sub-discipline of applied linguistics. It is broad-based and relatively new. As well as the various branches of linguistics, second-language acquisition is also closely related to psychology, cognitive psychology, and education. To separate the academic discipline from the learning process itself, the terms second-language acquisition research, second-language studies, and second-language acquisition studies are also used. SLA research began as an interdisciplinary field, and because of this it is difficult to identify a precise starting date. However, it does appear to have developed a great deal since the mid-1960s. The term acquisition was originally used to emphasize the subconscious nature of the learning process, but in recent years learning and acquisition have become largely synonymous. Learners acquire language through a subconscious process during which they are unaware of grammatical rules (Hoque, 2019).

Second-language acquisition can incorporate heritage language learning, but it does not usually incorporate bilingualism. Most SLA researchers see bilingualism as being the end result of learning a language, not the process itself, and see the term as referring to native-like fluency. Writers in fields such as education and psychology, however, often use bilingualism loosely to refer to all forms of multilingualism. Second language acquisition, on the other hand, generally refers to the learning of a nonnative language in the environment in which that language is spoken (Pilcher, 2015).

### C. Theories of Second Language Acquisition

Theories of Second Language Acquisition are based on Creative Construction Theory or the Naturalistic Approach (Atienza, 2017). This approach is based on the assumption that language acquisition is innately determined and that we are born with a certain system of language that we can call on later. Numerous linguists and methodologists support this innateness hypotheses. Chomsky, who is the leading proponent, claims that each human being possesses a set of innate properties of language which is responsible for the child's mastery of a native language in such a short time (Department of European Languages and Literature, 2008). Theories of Second Language Acquisition in correlation with language Acquisition Device (LAD), the innate knowledge, known as the language Acquisition Device (LAD), includes principle common to all human languages, called the Universal Grammar (UG). This is similar to the evidence corroborating the claim that the mind contains blueprints for grammatical rules comes, once again out of the mouths of babes and suckling's. For example, looking at the English agreement suffix -s as in "He walks" (Aljoundi, 2016).

Some linguists, in particular Stephen Krashen, distinguish between acquisition and learning. Acquisition is supposed to be a subconscious process which leads to fluency. Learning, on the other hand, is a conscious process which shows itself in terms of learning rules and structures. Furthermore, Krashen claims that there are three internal processors that operate when students learn or acquire a second language: the subconscious 'filter' and the 'organizer' as well as the conscious 'monitor'. The 'organizer' determines the organization of the learner's language system, the usage of incorrect grammatical constructions as provisional precursors of grammatical structures, the systematical occurrence of errors in the learner's utterances as well as a common order in which structures are learnt. The 'filter' is responsible for the extent to which the learner's acquisition is influenced by social circumstances such as motivation and affective factors such as anger or anxiety. The 'monitor' is responsible for conscious learning. The learners correct mistakes in their speech according to their age and self-consciousness (Hammerl & Newby, 2010).

Krashen's Input Hypothesis:

Krashen's Hypothesis in Second Language Acquisition. It is based on a set of five interrelated hypotheses that are listed below:

#### 1. The Acquisition-Learning Hypothesis

As mentioned above, Krashen claims that there is a difference between acquisition and learning. 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'. Learning is a conscious process in which 'learners attend to form, figure out <sup>4</sup>es, and are generally aware of their own process' (Hoque, 2019).

2. *The Monitor Hypothesis*

The monitor has nothing to do with acquisition but with learning. The learned system acts only as an editor or 'monitor', making minor changes and polishing what the acquired system has produced. According to Krashen, three conditions are necessary for monitor use: 1. sufficient time, 2. focus on form, 3. knowing the rules (El-Dali, 2015).

3. *The Natural Order Hypothesis*

This hypothesis states that we acquire the rules of a language in a certain order that is predictable (Prastyo, 2011). However, this does not mean that every acquirer will acquire grammatical structures in exactly the same order. It states rather that, in general, certain structures tend to be acquired early and others <sup>2</sup> to be acquired late. (Schütz, 2019).

4. *The Input Hypothesis*

This hypothesis states that it is important for the acquirer to understand language that is a bit beyond his or her current level of competence. This means, if a learner is on a level *i* the input he gets should be *i + 1*. This means that the language that learners are exposed to should be just far enough beyond their current competence that they can understand most of it but still is challenged to make progress (Brown 2002: 278).

5. *The Affective Filter Hypothesis*

This hypothesis states that it is easier for a learner to acquire a language when he/she is not tense, angry, anxious, or bored. According to Dulay and Burt, performers with optimal attitudes have a lower affective filter. A low filter means that the performer is more open to the input language (Cahyanti, 2018).

*D. English Proficiency and Comprehension*

Wiki in Sofa (2011) states, English proficiency is the ability to speak, read and/or write in English. <sup>8</sup> To be considered truly proficient, one should have advanced abilities in all three areas of communication. As theories vary among pedagogues as to what constitutes proficiency, there is little consistency as to how different organizations classify it. Additionally, fluency and language competence are generally recognized as being related, but separate controversial subjects. In predominant frameworks in the United States, proficient speakers demonstrate both accuracy and fluency, and use a variety of discourse strategies. Thus, native speakers of a language can be fluent without being considered proficient.

English is absolutely crucial because it is international language, English is the mostly frequently-spoken second language on the planet. English drives the global era. The current importance of English is obvious in order to truly participate in globalization, English proficiency is absolutely needed (to make our job opportunity large, to help you to understand literatures, etc) And as an English Teacher, having good English Proficiency is a must, so you can help your students improve their English Proficiency too.

Whereas comprehension is the ability to grasp something mentally and the capacity to understand ideas and facts. If we look at the definition between two terms above. Both have the similar meaning where the stress is in ability (Scannapieco, 2016).

*E. English Proficiency and Comprehension in relation to level and score*

Teachers hold a more developmental perspective. They see student as beginning, intermediate, or advanced knower of subject and teachers, as important persons within a student's talent development, hold prior views and experiences (Margot and Kettle, 2019).

But, Related to *score* of English ability levels, Glaser, (2014) specifies it into seven gradations namely the beginner level, the elementary level, the pre-intermediate level, the intermediate level, the upper-intermediate level, the advanced level and the proficient level. Therefore, to determine *score* of each level, the researcher follows Glaser's opinion, as follows:

1. The beginner level  
Score: 1 - 2
2. The elementary level  
Score: 3
3. The pre-intermediate level  
Score: 3.5 – 4.5
4. The intermediate level

- Score: 4.5 - 5.5
5. The upper-intermediate level  
Score: 5.5 – 6.5
6. The advanced level:  
Score: 6.5 - 7.7
7. The proficient level  
Score: 7.5+

#### F. The Natural Order Hypothesis

According to Liu (2015), The natural order hypothesis, in which rules of language are acquired in a predictable order, which might be different from the order followed in class instruction. The Natural Order Hypothesis is one of the five hypotheses which make up input hypothesis model of SLA. It holds that language learners acquire properties of an L2 in a predictable order, going through a series of common transitional stages in moving towards target language forms. Krashen also suggests that the natural order is unaffected by instruction. (See interface/non-interface positions in SLA, monitor model , morpheme acquisition studies ). So the natural order hypothesis states 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 first language of a speaker. However, as will be discussed later on in the book, this does not mean that grammar should be taught in this natural order of acquisition.

According to Mason ( 2011), in the case of The Natural Order Hypothesis, Krashen, using the research of colleagues Dulay & Burt suggests that, just as there is a natural sequence in the way children pick up their own first language, with certain grammatical morphemes being acquired before others, so there is for second languages.

#### *Average Order of Acquisition of Grammatical Morphemes for English as a Second Language (Children and Adults)*

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ING (progressive)

PLURAL

COPULA (to be)

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IRREGULAR PAST

AUXILIARY (progressive)

---

ARTICLE (a, the)

REGULAR PAST

III SINGULAR (-s)

POSSESSIVE (-s)

### Research Methodology

#### A. Research Method

Survey research meant as a way of making observations about the variables in which the indicator was the answer to the question, the answer given to the respondent either orally or in writing. Survey research is defined as "the collection of information from a sample of individuals through their responses to questions". This type of research allows for a variety of methods to recruit participants, collect data, and utilize various methods of instrumentation (2015).

#### B. Research Subject and Research Object

Research subject is something, whether people, things or institutions (organizations), the nature-condition will be studied. It is equal to Amirin (2009), research object is the nature of the circumstances ("attributes") of an object, person or circumstance, which become the center of attention or research objectives. The nature of the situation can be referred to the nature, quantity, and quality (objects, people, and institutions), can be a behavior, activities, opinions, views the assessment, etc.

In connection with this research subject, writer got fifteen students. They were students for the eighth year at SMPN 2 Terara, East Lombok, Western Lesser Sundas namely Tias Ayu Lestari, Baiq Ayu Apriliani, Humayani, Hikmah Hidayanti, Baiq Windi Rahayu, Baiq Murahati Syakila Putri, Misyu Laeli Apriliani, Ayu Devita, Mansur, Agas Muliadi, Mahsarlina, Ayu Ulandari, Noval Wahyu, and Nirmala Ramadania dan Titik Oktavia. Whereas research objects were: (1) students' comprehension about the Grammatical Morphemes, and (2) Students' comprehension about the Grammatical Morphemes in the context of a certain factor.

### C. Setting of Research

The researcher conducted the research at SMPN 2 Terara, east Lombok, NTB.

### D. Informant Research

Informant research is a person who has information (data) much about the object being studied, asked for information about the object of research, (Amirin, 2009). Information or data concerning the above mentioned research objects obtained from the research informants viz Majidi, S.pd. He is a English teacher . He is 45 years old. He lives in the Montong Gading village, Montong Betok sub-district, East Lombok regency, province of Western Lesser Sundas (*Nusa Tenggara Barat*). He teaches English subject for students who are at the eighth year.

### E. Research Instruments

The instruments of this study were observation and interviews, questionnaire (questionnaire about grammatical morphemes).

### F. Data Collection Techniques

The researcher used data collection procedures to obtain data in the field as follows: (1) The engaged and competent technique was a technique in which researcher engage directly in dialogue with the informant, and (2) The researcher observed the location of the study and (3) the researcher gave students questionnaire (questionnaire about grammatical morphemes).

### G. Data Analysis Techniques

Data analysis techniques from this brief study were as follows: (1) data were obtained from informants either through direct interviews of non formal and recordings, as well as from the results of observations were recorded on a separate sheet, (2) data were obtained and classified based on aspects of the study, (3) to classify data according to the needs of research, (4) analyzing the research data in accordance with the actual situation based on the research objectives, (5) to formulate conclusions and prepared a report

## Research Findings and Discussion

### A. Students' comprehension about the Grammatical Morphemes

In world of education, as we know that, based curriculum which is applied nowadays that the English subject is taught at elementary school, junior high school, senior high school, and high education (university), One of materials of the English lesson is about grammar. In the Grammar, there is term of Grammatical Morphemes. Every English teacher must teach his/her students about it surely. Although it is taught to them but ability in understanding it differently from one another.

This case is commensurate with the research result that writer did. Writer did research about students' comprehension about Grammatical Morphemes toward fifteen students. They are students for the eighth year at SMPN 2 Terara, East Lombok. (see table 1.).

**Table 1. Research result of Students' comprehension about the Grammatical Morphemes for the eighth year at SMPN 2 Terara, East Lombok**

Numbers	Name of Students	Total of questions	Ability to answer
1.	Tias Ayu Lestari	10	8
2.	Ayu Devita	10	7
3.	Misyu Lachi Apriliani	10	7

4.	Bq, Murahati Syakila Putri	10	7
5.	Bq, Windi Rahayu	10	7
6.	Humayani	10	7
7.	Bq, Ayu Apriliani	10	7
8.	Agas Muliadi	10	6
9.	Mansur	10	6
10.	Hikmah Hidayanti	10	6
11.	Ayu Ulandari	10	5
12.	Nirmala Ramadania	10	4
13.	Mahsarlina	10	4
14.	Noval Wahyu	10	3
15.	Titik Oktavia	10	2

Data of the table 1. Showed that the students' ability were varied where ten questions that the researcher gave to students. One person was able to answer 8 questions, six persons were able to answer 7 questions, three persons were able to answer 6 questions, two persons were able to answer 5 questions, two persons were able to answer 4 questions, one person was able to answer 3 questions, and one person was able to answer 2 questions. In this case, related to *score* of English ability levels, **Glaser (2014)** specifies it into seven gradations namely the beginner level, the elementary level, the pre-intermediate level, the intermediate level, the upper-intermediate level, the advanced level and the proficient level. Therefore, to determine *score* of each level, writer follows Embassyces' opinion, as follows:

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5. The upper-intermediate level  
Score: 5.5 – 6.5
6. The advanced level:  
Score: 6.5 - 7.7
7. The proficient level  
Score: 7.5+

Thus the students who are categorized by a certain ability are as follows:

1. The beginner level: Titik Oktavia  
Score: 2
2. The elementary level: Noval Wahyu  
Score: 3
3. The pre-intermediate level: Mahsarlina, Nirmala Ramadania  
Score: 4
4. The intermediate level: Ayu Ulandari  
Score: 5
5. The upper-intermediate level: Agas Muliadi, Mansur, Hikmah Hidayanti  
Score: 6
6. The advanced level: Ayu Devita, Misyu Lachi Apriliani, Bq, Murahati Syakila Putri, Bq, Windi Rahayu, Humayani, Bq, Ayu Apriliani,  
Score: 7
7. The proficient level: Tias Ayu Lestari  
Score: 8

*B. Students' comprehension about the Grammatical Morphemes in the context of factor x.*



Every Student has a different ability or English proficiency. It is caused by the affective factor i.e. anxious, lack self –confidence in their ability and poorly motivated, and so on, when learners have high motivation, low anxiety , or non-threatening atmosphere can be created, the affective factor will not inhibit the process, and acquisition will be facilitated, and on the other hand. The commensurate thing is stated by Krashen. He points to the importance of motivation, self-confidence and anxiety. He holds that these factors are more involved in constructing the acquired system than in learning - they are more strongly related to achievement as measured by communicative tests than by formal language tests. He writes : “The Affective Filter Hypothesis captures the relationship between affective variables and the process of second language acquisition by positing that acquirers vary with respect to the strength or level of their Affective Filters. Those whose attitudes are not optimal for second language acquisition will not only tend to seek less input, but they will also have a high or strong Affective Filter - even if they understand the message, the input will not reach that part of the brain responsible for language acquisition, or the language acquisition device. Those with attitudes more conducive to second language acquisition will not only seek and obtain more input, they will also have a lower or weaker filter. They will be more open to the input, and it will strike "deeper" (Gass, 2013).

The similar case happened to students for the eighth year at SMPN 2 Terara, East Lombok. They have different English proficiency. This case we can see on their comprehension about the Grammatical morphemes. According to information from English teacher who teaches students for the eighth year namely Majidi, S.pd. He said “ their English proficiencies are different from one another which are caused by the affective factor”. Furthermore said that among them, there were part of the students who have the high self-confidence, motivation , low anxiety, consequently their English proficiency appeared and on the contrary.

### Conclusion

Every Student has a different English proficiency. It is caused by factor x. One of the factors that influence their ability is the affective factor. The affective factor i.e. anxious, lack self –confidence in their ability and poorly motivated. When learners have high motivation, low anxiety , or non-threatening atmosphere can be created, the affective factor will not inhibit the process, and acquisition language will be facilitated, English proficiency increases and on the other hand.

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# STUDENTS' ENGLISH PROFICIENCY IN SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

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