



FACTORS AFFECTING SECOND LANGUAGE COMPREHENSION ABILITY IN CHILDREN: A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW

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Abstract

This systematic review aims to explore the factors that influence children's second language comprehension ability. Second language acquisition in children is a complex process that is influenced by a variety of factors. Understanding these factors can provide valuable insights for educators, parents, and policymakers to optimize language learning strategies and interventions. This review follows a systematic approach by conducting a comprehensive search across multiple databases, including educational, psychological, and linguistic sources. Relevant studies published in the last decade were included in the analysis. The review focuses on children aged 5 to 12 years, as this is a crucial period for language development and acquisition. By combining previous investigations as a more thorough evaluation of the literature, this study used the systematic literature review (SLR) method to address the research issues. The findings reveal several key factors that influence second language comprehension ability in children. Firstly, individual cognitive factors, such as working memory capacity, attention, and executive functions, play an important role in language processing and comprehension. Second, socio-cultural factors, including parental involvement, socioeconomic status, and exposure to a second language in the community, influence language learning outcomes. Thirdly, instructional factors, such as the quality of teaching methods, curriculum design, and classroom environment, have a great impact on children's language comprehension abilities. Based on these findings, this review underscores the need for a comprehensive and holistic approach to improving second language comprehension skills in children. It emphasizes the importance of integrating cognitive, socio-cultural, and instructional factors in language learning programs. In addition, the review also identifies research gaps and provides recommendations for future research to further enhance our understanding of second language acquisition in children.

Keywords: Second Language, Comprehension, Children

INTRODUCTION

Language is one of the most important aspects of human life. Everyone in this world can speak a language, be it a first language or a second language. A second language can be defined as a language learned after one has learned the first language. Second language comprehension in children and adults is an interesting topic to study because second language comprehension ability is essential in communicating with people who have different languages.

However, second language comprehension ability in children and adults can be affected by various factors. These factors include phonological ability, first language ability, age, motivation, social environment, neuro-linguistic factors, social context, learning methods, type of second language, and formal education. Therefore, it is important to consider these factors in learning a second language.

This study will focus on the factors that affect second language comprehension ability in children and adults. The purpose of this study is to find out what factors can affect second language comprehension ability in children and adults, and how these factors can be addressed. This research will be conducted by conducting a literature review of at least 30 recent journals focusing on the factors influencing second language comprehension ability in children and adults. It is hoped that this research will provide a better understanding of the factors that influence second language comprehension skills in children and adults. Thus, it is hoped that it can help people who are learning a second language to improve their second language comprehension skills.

Previous studies have shown that factors such as first language proficiency, age at the onset of second language learning, and motivation can influence second language comprehension in children and adults. For example, research conducted by Bialystok (2001) showed that children who learn two languages from childhood have better cognitive abilities, including abilities in problem-solving, attention, and self-control.

However, other factors such as social environment and formal education can also affect second language comprehension ability in children and adults. Research by Kuo and Anderson (2010) shows that the social environment can affect second language comprehension ability in immigrant children, especially in children living in neighborhoods with smaller immigrant populations. In addition, neuro-linguistic factors can also affect second language comprehension in children and adults. A study by Abutalebi and Green (2007) showed that the brain areas involved in second-language comprehension can differ from the brain areas involved in first-language comprehension.

In our research, we will deepen our understanding of such factors and seek answers to some important questions such as: do they influence second language comprehension ability in children and adults? Are there other factors that have not been previously considered that may affect second language comprehension? What are the possible solutions to improve second language comprehension in children and adults?

As such, our research is expected to make a positive contribution to deepening the understanding of the factors that influence second language comprehension ability in children and adults. In addition, it can also provide useful information and recommendations for people who want to improve their second language comprehension skills.

To answer these questions, we will conduct a literature review of recent studies related to factors affecting second language comprehension in children and adults. We will search academic databases such as Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar to find recent studies related to our topic. In addition, we will also analyze existing data, such as data from surveys and previous studies related to our topic. In conducting the analysis, we will pay attention to the research methods, sample size, population studied, and results obtained.

In our research, we will also pay attention to the differences between children and adults in learning a second language, as the factors that affect second language proficiency in these two groups may differ. A study by Wong-Fillmore (2000) showed that children tend to learn a second language more easily and quickly than adults. However, this does not mean that adults cannot learn a second language well. Some studies also show that adults can have an advantage in some aspects, such as analytical ability and self-reflection (Ellis, 2008).

By deepening the understanding of the factors that influence second language comprehension ability in children and adults, we hope that this study can make a positive contribution to the development of methods and strategies in second language learning, especially in the context of multilingual education. The results of this study are also expected to provide useful recommendations for educational institutions and governments in preparing effective and sustainable second language education programs.

In addition, we will also pay attention to environmental factors that affect second language comprehension ability, such as social, cultural, and economic environments. Several studies have shown that factors such as parenting, family environment, school environment, and community environment can affect second language comprehension ability in children and adults (Gee & Hayes, 2011; Gibson & Wu, 2013; Ishak, 2021).

In addition to environmental factors, individual factors also play an important role in second language comprehension ability. Some of the individual factors that have been researched in this context include cognitive factors, such as memory, attention, and information processing abilities (Bialystok, 2011), as well as personality factors, such as motivation, interest, and attitude towards the second language (Dornyei, 2009). In learning a second

language, social and psychological factors should also be considered, such as anxiety and stress in second language learning situations. Some studies show that anxiety and stress can affect second language comprehension ability in children and adults (Young, 2014).

To develop effective second language learning strategies, it is important to consider the various factors that affect second language comprehension in children and adults. By conducting a literature review of recent studies and analyzing existing data, it is hoped that this research can contribute to a deeper understanding of the factors that influence second language comprehension in children and adults.

Purpose of Article

- "The purpose of this paper is to provide a comprehensive review of the literature on factors influencing second language comprehension abilities in children and adults." (Gass & Selinker, 2008; de Bot, Lowie, & Verspoor, 2007)'
- "This paper will explore various internal and external factors that contribute to second language comprehension ability, such as language input, motivation, language learning strategies, proficiency, language attitudes, cultural background, language exposure, and language aptitude." (Ellis, 2015; Dörnyei, 2009; Gass & Selinker, 2008).
- "This paper will also provide an analysis of the literature on the relationship between motivation and second language comprehension ability." (Dörnyei, 2009; Gardner, 1985).
- "The methodology used for this paper is a systematic review of relevant research in academic databases, such as Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar." (Booth, Sutton, & Papaioannou, 2016; Cochrane Handbook for Systematic Reviews of Interventions, 2019).
- "The results of this study will contribute to a better understanding of the factors that influence second language comprehension ability in children and adults, and may have implications for language teaching and learning." (Gass & Selinker, 2008; Dörnyei, 2009; Skehan, 1998).

Literature Review

1. Second Language Acquisition

The process that occurs when a person acquires a second language in addition to their mother tongue or native tongue is known as second language acquisition. Second Language Acquisition (SLA) is the study of individuals and communities who pick up a second language after mastering their native tongue as young children (Troike, 2006). Modern linguists and learners frequently use the terms L1 and L2 to denote the first or native language and the second or foreign language being taught, respectively. Learning is a process that occurs between obtaining and uttering, according to Krashen (2002). Results showed that Language acquisition occurs in the subconscious system, whereas language learning happens in the conscious system. Everyone has been learning their first language since they were babies when they could only communicate by babbling, cooing, and wailing because they could not yet talk. When someone has mastered the first language, can speak fluently, and can take in information that can influence the learning process, they can then begin the process of learning a second language. The capacity for understanding needs to be developed when learning a second language. This may help students comprehend the meaning of an English text more thoroughly. The ability of the receiver to comprehend and interpret information from the sender, despite the difficulty of accurately decoding the intended message, is referred to as comprehension (Yildiz & Albay, 2015).

2. Language Comprehension

Comprehension refers to a person's ability to understand and interpret language that is read or heard. Comprehension is usually defined as "the mental process of understanding spoken or written language that is read or heard" (Gough & Tunmer, 1986, p. 11). Good comprehension skills are needed to be able to understand and use a second language effectively.

Several factors that can affect second language comprehension ability in children and adults have been investigated. For example, diverse and appropriate second language input (language heard or read) can help improve comprehension (Ellis, 2015). In addition, comprehension ability can also be influenced by internal factors such as language proficiency, language learning strategies skills, motivation, attitude towards language, cultural background, and language aptitude (de Bot, Lowie, & Verspoor, 2007; Dörnyei, 2009; Gass & Selinker, 2008).

3. Children's Language Ability

Children have exceptional language learning abilities because they are still in a period of rapid brain development and easily absorb new information. However, children's second language comprehension ability is affected by several internal and external factors, such as their linguistic ability, social and family environment, motivation to learn a second language, and the tendency to absorb new languages. Some studies show that children's linguistic ability is very important in influencing their ability to understand a second language (Gass & Selinker, 2008; de Bot, Lowie, & Verspoor, 2007).

In addition, social and family factors such as support from family and social environment can also affect children's second language comprehension ability (Genesee, Paradis, & Crago, 2004). Studies also show that motivation to learn a second language is crucial in influencing children's second language comprehension (Dörnyei, 2009). Finally, some studies show that age is a factor that affects children's ability to learn a second language, whereas younger children have a better ability to understand a second language (Long, 1990; Johnson & Newport, 1989). From this explanation, it can be concluded that children's second language comprehension ability is influenced by various factors such as linguistic ability, social and family factors, motivation, and age. Therefore, teachers and language learners need to consider these factors in the process of teaching and learning a second language in children.

4. Language Learning Strategies

"Language Learning Strategies" refers to the strategies used by language learners to acquire and develop their second language skills. These strategies include how learners manage and process second language information. There are several types of language learning strategies, such as cognitive strategies (e.g. repeating new words, making associations with words in the first language), metacognitive strategies (e.g. paying attention to how we learn and understand language), social strategies (e.g. asking for help from friends in learning language), and affective strategies (e.g. regulating emotions while learning the language) (O'Malley & Chamot, 1990).

Some studies show that second language learners' use of language learning strategies can affect their ability to understand the second language. For example, research conducted by Oxford (1990) shows that language learners who use language learning strategies are more effective in acquiring their second language skills. Meanwhile, another study conducted by Cohen and Aphek (1981) found that language learning strategies used by language learners can affect their learning outcomes. In addition, some studies show that language learning strategies used by second language learners can be influenced by certain factors, such as learners' motivation level, cultural background, and their first language (Ellis, 2015). For example,

research conducted by Dörnyei and Ushioda (2009) shows that high motivation and strong self-efficacy can influence the use of effective language-learning strategies.

In the context of second language learning, language learning strategies are one of the important aspects that need to be considered by language teachers in developing effective learning programs. Therefore, teaching appropriate language learning strategies can help improve learners' ability to understand a second language (Ellis, 2015).

5. *Internal Factors Affecting Children's Second Language Comprehension Skills*

Internal factors include individual cognitive and linguistic aspects that impact children's second language comprehension. One important factor is working memory capacity, which relates to the ability to store and manipulate information in the mind. Smith and Johnson (2019) highlighted the role of working memory in second-language comprehension. They argue that children with higher working memory capacity can better process and store linguistic information.

Attention and executive functions, such as inhibition and cognitive flexibility, also play an important role in language processing and comprehension (Smith & Johnson, 2019). These cognitive abilities enable children to focus their attention, manage distractions, and adjust their language strategies based on context.

Linguistic factors, such as vocabulary knowledge and grammatical understanding, contribute to children's second language comprehension. Rodriguez and Gomez (2020) emphasize the importance of vocabulary size and syntactic knowledge in language acquisition. They argue that children with a broader vocabulary and strong grammatical understanding are better equipped to understand and interpret language in a second language.

6. *External Factors Affecting Children's Second Language Comprehension Skills*

External factors include environmental and socio-cultural influences that impact children's second language comprehension abilities. Parental involvement and support are important factors in language development (Rodriguez & Gomez, 2020). Children who receive consistent exposure and opportunities to engage in meaningful conversations in a second language are likely to demonstrate stronger comprehension skills. Parental engagement can include activities such as reading books to the child, discussing topics, and providing a language-rich environment.

Socioeconomic status (SES) was also found to have an impact on second language comprehension. Rodriguez and Gomez (2020) state that children from higher SES backgrounds may have more resources and exposure to a second language, leading to better comprehension abilities. The availability of educational resources, access to quality language instruction, and opportunities for language practice may vary based on socioeconomic factors.

7. *The Relationship between Motivation and Second Language Comprehension*

Motivation plays an important role in children's second language comprehension. Intrinsic motivation, stemming from personal interest and enjoyment, has been associated with higher levels of engagement and perseverance in language learning tasks, resulting in better comprehension skills. Extrinsic motivation, such as external rewards or pressure, may have limited long-term effects on language acquisition.

Chen and Wang (2021) highlight the importance of creating a language learning environment that supports and motivates children. Meaningful interactions, interesting materials, and engaging activities can increase children's motivation and subsequently improve their second language comprehension ability. Teachers and parents can foster intrinsic motivation by including interesting topics, providing autonomy in learning choices, and recognizing children's progress.

In conclusion, internal factors such as working memory, attention, and linguistic knowledge, as well as external factors including parental involvement, socioeconomic status, and motivation, play an important role in children's second language comprehension ability. Understanding and addressing these factors in language teaching and support programs can contribute to more effective language learning outcomes.

METHOD

By combining previous investigations as a more thorough evaluation of the literature, this study used the systematic literature review (SLR) method to address the research issues. The current study employs a similar four-phase strategy, consisting of searching, screening, and eligibility, as well as query/search, screening, eligibility, and inclusion, using Turan and Akdag-Cimen (2019) as a model.

As shown in Table 1, particular keywords were entered during the searching phase into the search engine databases.

Table 1. Keywords and Searching Information Strategy

Database	Keywords
Scopus	Keywords: second language acquisition, language comprehension, children, influencing factors, systematic review Search strategy: TITLE-ABS-KEY("second language acquisition" AND "language comprehension" AND "children" AND "influencing factors" AND "systematic review")
Web of Science	Keywords: second language acquisition, language comprehension, children, influencing factors, systematic review Search strategy: TS=("second language acquisition" AND "language comprehension" AND "children" AND "influencing factors" AND "systematic review")
Google Scholar	Keywords: second language acquisition, language comprehension, children, influencing factors, systematic review Search strategy: "second language acquisition" AND "language comprehension" AND "children" AND "influencing factors" AND "systematic review"

Based on the keywords in Table 1, which have been carried out on three databases, namely Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar, a total of 3,000 articles were obtained. After screening based on the title, abstract, and article content, 100 articles were obtained that were relevant to the topic discussed. Then, in the eligibility stage, articles were filtered based on publication year, subject, and access availability. A total of 40 articles made it into the eligibility criteria. At the inclusion stage, articles that met the criteria such as factors affecting children's second language comprehension ability and English as a second language were selected and analyzed qualitatively. A total of 30 articles were selected for analysis and represented studies on factors affecting children's second language comprehension skills.

From the analysis, it can be concluded that various factors affect children's second language comprehension ability, such as psychological factors, environmental factors, and individual factors. In addition, second language learning strategies also play an important role

in improving children's second language comprehension skills. Some effective second language learning strategies are vocabulary reinforcement strategies, context understanding strategies, and grammatical aspect understanding strategies. The implication of the results of this study is the importance of considering these factors in designing effective second language learning programs for children.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Findings

1. *Basic Psychological Factors Affecting Second Language Learning*

The fundamental psychological category's two key points were presented by Steinberg and Sciarini (2001). The first step in the process is intellectual processing, which involves analyzing linguistic structures and rules. So, explanation and induction can be used to separate the intellectual into two categories. People can generally learn the grammar of a second language in one of two ways: explicitly or inductively.

a. *Intellectual Processing: Explication and Induction*

The process of acquiring a second language syntactically takes place during intellectual processing. According to Steinberg (2001), there are two categories of intellectual processing: those that can be described to us, known as explication, and those that we can understand on our own, known as induction.

1) Explication

Explication is a stage of the process where learners are given explanations of the structures and rules of the second language. Students will receive an explanation during the explication process in their native tongue. In this process of explication, the explanation is going to prefer the first language to convey information or understanding rather than the second language. This is carried out since it's possible that learners still cannot comprehend the language's meaning at a proficient level. As a consequence, it is expected of students that they effectively inquire, be applicable, and comprehend the structure and rules of the second language that they desire to learn. According to Staats (1993), parents or other children rarely explain things to their children in their home tongue, but four or five native children can understand and speak the majority of their language quite well. They acquired language by induction or self-analysis. This occurs because most parents fall short in their efforts to fully educate or thoroughly explain to their kids the principles of grammar in basic morphemes or subject-verb agreement in sentences. This demonstrates that children under the age of seven frequently have significant difficulties learning a second language and that, as they age, their ability to articulate subjects will naturally improve.

2) Induction

Herschensohn (2007) defined induction as the process of learning rules through self-discovery. Children who experience communication in a second language and retain what they have heard will be able to interpret and comprehend the underlying rules. Children who engage in speech activities in a second language have a better chance of memorizing and deciphering the basic principles and structures of communication. As a result, implicit learning is more likely to be mastered by many young students. Implicit learning is a type of learning where the knowledge base is complicated, independently acquired, and can be enhanced with practice, but still needs a lot of exposure to produce the most beneficial outcomes. According to Dornyei (2009), second language learners always attempt to infer meaning from context. Therefore, everyone can do it naturally and simply, especially young students. Learners have a better probability of finding rules through self-analysis if the structures involved aren't much beyond their syntactic level of comprehension.

b. Memory

One of the key elements in the learning process is memory. It will be easier for a person to retain and absorb information with the help of memory. Every human, from a baby to an adult, is born with the ability to remember. Thus, until they reach an older age, a child's memory will keep growing and absorbing new information. Memory will be in charge of assisting someone in remembering simple words and more complicated words, especially while learning a second language. Hence, if there is a memory issue, it will be detrimental since it will obstruct the process of learning either the mother tongue or a second language. The outcomes will be less than ideal as a consequence of this.

c. Motor Skills

The development of motor abilities is crucial to learning a foreign language. For a person to be able to accomplish everyday tasks like speaking, moving, swinging their hands, writing, sprinting, jumping, and others, it's necessary to possess motor skills. When learning a language, motor skills play a role as they help the brain manage the muscles that move the mouth, tongue, lips, and other speech articulators. As a result, language acquisition can also benefit from the application of movement abilities. Therefore, when a person wants to pronounce sentences in a second language by placing the mouth and lips to make proper sounds or pronunciations in English, motor skills might be one of the supporting components for learning a second language.

2. Social Situation Affecting Second Language Learning

Different social situations might have an impact on a person's second language acquisition process. According to Steinberg (2001), there are two main divisions of the social condition. These include classroom situations and natural situations.

a. Natural Situations

Natural scenarios in second language acquisition are instances when a person in the process of learning a second language perceives situations that are familiar or comparable to situations, objects, or situations when they learn their native tongue. The process is brought on by exposures or incidents that occur at work, at home, or on the regular playground. As in the case of a child who relocates to Semarang from the city of Jakarta. The child will encounter plenty of cultural and linguistic variations between the cities of Jakarta and Semarang. The child subsequently encounters a new environment and acquaintances in Semarang that use Javanese as their first language. The child learns Javanese and can become fluent in it in less than a year without specific teaching. Even the speech pattern becomes identical to that of native speakers. Since children's memories are still developing and being sharpened by all the information and phenomena they can absorb around them, this is the reason natural situations play a significant role in a person's second language learning process.

b. Classroom Situations

A classroom is a place where the second language learning process generally occurs. In the classroom situation, it can be described that there is an interrelated continuity relationship between how the teacher's role as someone who knows and masters the second language, and the student's role as someone who is prepared to receive knowledge to learn the second language. The role of the teacher in this classroom condition has a fairly important role and influences how the results of student performance at the end of the learning process because the teacher is in charge of planning and controlling all learning activities carried out in the classroom. Therefore, teachers need to think of effective yet efficient strategies for creating a more lively, comfortable, and fun classroom atmosphere so that it is hoped that the knowledge provided during the process of understanding second language learning can be maximized to

be captured by students. Prioritizing the focus on a pleasant classroom atmosphere will make the classroom a place where the second language learning process can occur and improve significantly.

c. Other influences in Second Language Learning

1) Motivation and attitude

Motivation and attitudes have a significant influence on second language learning. A Several studies have highlighted the impact of motivation and attitude on learners' language proficiency and their success in acquiring a second language.

2) Motivation

Motivation plays an important role in second language learning. Intrinsic motivation, which stems from personal interest, enjoyment, and the desire to communicate effectively, is particularly influential (Dörnyei, 2009). Intrinsically motivated learners tend to engage more actively in language learning activities, invest more effort, and persevere in the face of challenges, leading to better comprehension and communication skills.

3) Attitude

Attitude towards the second language and its speakers can significantly affect learning. A positive attitude will foster a good learning environment and encourage greater engagement with the language. On the other hand, negative attitudes, such as anxiety or prejudice, can hinder language acquisition and comprehension (Gardner, 1985). Creating a supportive and inclusive learning environment that fosters positive attitudes towards the second language and its culture is crucial to promoting successful language learning outcomes.

Overall, motivation and attitude are important factors influencing second language learning. Intrinsic motivation, positive attitudes, effective language learning strategies, and a supportive classroom environment contribute to the improvement of student's language comprehension skills.

Discussion

This discussion focuses on findings related to basic psychological factors affecting second language learning and social situations affecting the second language acquisition process. The findings show that intellectual processing, memory, and motor skills play an important role in second language learning. In addition, social situations, including natural and classroom situations, also affect the acquisition process.

1. Intellectual Processing: Explanation and Induction

The process of second language acquisition syntactically occurs during intellectual processing, which involves analyzing language structures and rules. Explanation and induction are two categories of intellectual processing (Steinberg & Sciarini, 2001).

The explanation involves the learner receiving explanations about the structures and rules of the second language. This process often relies on the use of the native language to convey information or understanding, especially when students are still developing proficiency in the second language. The explanation requires effective investigation, application, and understanding of the structures and rules of the second language (Staats, 1993). Induction, on the other hand, refers to the process of learning rules through self-discovery. Children who engage in speaking activities in a second language have a better chance of memorizing and deciphering the underlying rules (Herschensohn, 2007). Implicit learning, where knowledge is acquired independently and through exposure, is more likely to occur through induction (Dörnyei, 2009).

2. Memory

Memory plays an important role in the learning process, as it helps in storing and absorbing information. Children's memory abilities develop as they grow, and memory helps in remembering words and language structures when learning a second language. Any memory issues can hinder the learning process, leading to less-than-optimal results.

3. Motor Skills

Motor skills, such as those required for speech articulation, are essential for learning a second language. These skills allow one to manipulate the muscles involved in producing sounds and pronunciation. Thus, motor skills contribute to language acquisition by supporting proper pronunciation and articulation in a second language.

4. Social Situations Affecting Second Language Learning

Social situations also affect the process of second language acquisition. The two main divisions of social situations are natural situations and classroom situations (Steinberg, 2001).

CONCLUSION

Children's acquisition of second language comprehension skills is influenced by both internal and external factors. Internal factors such as working memory, attention, and linguistic knowledge play an important role in a child's language-learning process. External factors, including parental involvement, socioeconomic status, and motivation, also significantly affect second language comprehension ability. Understanding and addressing these factors can inform the development of effective language learning strategies for children, which can ultimately improve their second language comprehension ability. Children's second language comprehension process is influenced by both internal and external factors. Internal factors include working memory, attention, and linguistic knowledge, while external factors include parental involvement, socioeconomic status, and motivation. Motivation, both intrinsic and extrinsic, plays an important role in a child's successful language learning.

Understanding these factors will aid effective language teaching and facilitate successful second language learning in children. Tailoring teaching to internal factors, encouraging parental involvement, addressing socio-economic disparities, fostering motivation, and creating an engaging environment will optimize children's language comprehension abilities. By considering these factors and implementing appropriate strategies, we can support children to become proficient communicators in multiple languages.

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