

Student Name

Professor Name

Course

Date

### Universal Grammar in Adult Second Language Acquisition

Various research studies have explored the issue of Second Language Acquisition (SLA) and Universal Grammar (UG) in the framework of adult language learning, yet some controversial points remain unanswered. There are the three components that identify the cognitive systems of an adult learner (L2), the first of which is the external data that he or she obtains from the outside world. The second element refers to some internal knowledge that converts the external data into experience, while the third one focuses on the broader outside context (Dąbrowska 8). The second component can be regarded as the theory of language that offers a system of principles and parameters of a certain language or UG. In its turn, SLA refers to the learning of the second language that is not native for learners. While some scholars consider that UG is completely available to SLA in adult learners due to its inherent nature, others argue that it cannot be accessible or just partially available to them based on the integrity of grammar and language structure.

There are several hypotheses that are associated with UG availability in SLA. As noted by Hummel, a language is a part of the natural world, and grammar rules of a particular language act as a theory of this language (38). For example, according to no access hypothesis, adult learners have no access to UG due to their age as well as the non-linguistic nature of SLA. In contrast, the full access hypothesis implies that UG is completely available for L2 learners, since they tend to combine

both lexical and functional aspects in their learning process (Yin and Kaiser 460).

Thus, UG plays an integral role in SLA for adults in particular.

The way the adult learners study a new language depends not only on the availability of UG, but also on their individual peculiarities. Elaborating on the idea of diversity, Saville-Troike considers that SLA is likely to occur in different contexts (6). For example, adults may learn at home, courses, work, or in any other settings. This leads to the statement that various factors affect SLA effectiveness, depending on a particular learning environment. Indeed, a language structure is largely formed by universals of human conditions: how a person thinks and what he or she wants to communicate. Different channels are secondary and adapted by people to practical functions (Saville-Troike 7; Zhang 562). Even with the comparison of systems of grammatical categories in the finger language and traditional languages, one can note the identity of language structures, since the key differences relate to the channel of communication.

The connection of a language with the sensory-motor system facilitates learners' communication with others and helps to build proper relationships based on a certain context. Reviewing the theory that was suggested by Chomsky, Hulin and Na argue that human language is composed of the unlimited set of interpretive expressions, each of which relates to such systems as sensory-motor, mental, conceptual, and so on (2). Such UG expresses the essence of human language and does not change from language to language: while grammar composes a theory of competence, UG is associated with a system of principles that determine the nature of linguistic representations and rules.

Elaborating on the ideas expressed by Chomsky, Menezes argues that they are essential in comprehending the role and availability of UG in SLA (402). In

particular, the scholar provides convincing arguments, stating that such theories as behaviorism and some others should not be excluded from linguistics interpretation. On the contrary, they are to be taken into account and thoroughly investigated to reconcile both traditional and modern theories. Grammar appears in the course of human development as the processes that form how languages are passed down from generation to generation and as a consequence of human psychology in the form of a set of social and cognitive abilities that allow generations to learn the language.

Most importantly, the language affects those brain systems that were not originally aimed at this purpose, thus opposing Chomsky's view of the genetic mutation to recursion. To support her speculation with evidence, Menezes discovers the attitudes of L2 adult learners and concludes that SLA is a complex and rather volatile phenomenon that is not necessarily inherent to L2 learners (410). Hummel focuses on practices and perspectives in SLA (77). The study of neurolinguistic and psycholinguistic categories and constructions may significantly benefit understanding of an adult SLA and UG concept.

To conclude, various scholars determine the role and availability of UG in adult SLA, focusing on the two key aspects: complete availability and non-availability. In my point of view, it seems that UG is determined by the context of studying and learners' personal characteristics. The future study of the mentioned issues is likely to lead to more effective and faster SLA in adult learners.

Works Cited

- Dąbrowska, Ewa. "What Exactly is Universal Grammar, and Has Anyone Seen It?" *Frontiers in Psychology*, vol. 6, no. 1, 2015, pp. 1–17.
- Hummel, Kirsten M. *Introducing Second Language Acquisition: Perspectives and Practices*. Wiley & Sons, 2014.
- Menezes, Vera. "Second Language Acquisition: Reconciling Theories." *Open Journal of Applied Sciences*, vol. 3, no. 7, 2013, pp. 404–412.
- Saville-Troike, Muriel. *Introducing Second Language Acquisition*. Cambridge UP, 2012.
- Yin, Bin, and Elsi Kaiser. "Second Language Learners' Knowledge of Syntax in the Acquisition of Aspectual Semantics." *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, vol. 97, no. 6, 2013, pp. 454–463.
- Zhang, Dongbo. "Vocabulary and Grammar Knowledge in Second Language Reading Comprehension: A Structural Equation Modeling Study." *The Modern Language Journal*, vol. 96, no. 4, 2012, pp. 558-575.