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## **ACQUISITION: PROCESS, STRATEGY, PROBLEM IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNING**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This paper explained the pattern of overcoming difficulties of foreign language learning, identifying based one previous study in learning English as a foreign language. Yet, it also shows general strategies that are useful to overcome the difficulties of acquiring a foreign language based on processability theory. Then, it examines that for learning a foreign language, as the learners need proper time and good management; however, the concept reveals need to focus that teacher's role, learning methods, and strategies are advised. As the previous study shows of authentic material motivated learners to improve their focus study in a foreign language as a subject.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

This part will be discussed concerns such as why do learners appear to foreseeable paths in their acquisition. As the subject study, English is the most widespread international use of language in most of the country in the world, is it for the language education, medicine, business, etc. in other venture, English is as a language of figuring of its global language. However, most of the people are defied in the learning progression and learning it. This paper sight the main problem in foreign language learning, identifies the acquisitions of language base on previous theory. It presents methods of incapacitating complications of acquisition of foreign language and shows several strategies for acquisition achievement and constructive output in learning a foreign language. Kormos (2020) argues the learner's attitude has a great effect on learning a language because learner, positive attitude directly change learning language.

Recently, most of the researchers investigating difficulties in learning foreign languages. As Honbolygó & Csépe (2019) mentioned one of challenge foreign language

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learner face in processing is cultural differences that often renders the learners to feel distributed; group learners master the sufficient number of vocabularies, in good command comprehension. That argument is not relevant if it did not discuss how its language acquisition.

The acquisition of a foreign language is called language acquisition (SLA) where it is contingent on the social environment and level of cognitive which is possessed by the child the learning process in his environment (Lightfoot, 2010). In line with what is meant by second language acquisition is the process of learning foreign languages than the native language. For example, a child who speaks Javanese as a mother tongue then starts speaking English when he starts going to school. Foreign language learner is educated through the process of mastering a second language. So, acquisition of the first language refers to the way children learn their native language while the second language refers to learning other languages or non-native languages.

Chomsky (1965) in Nurhadi (1990: 37) states that humans learn languages by using an acquisition tool called the Language Acquisition Device (LAD). The process of learning a second language is very different when compared to the process of acquiring a first language. The process of learning a second language is more complex because in it several factors need attention. Humans as learners and acquirers of the first, second, or foreign languages always encounter difficulties and conveniences in their efforts to obtain and learn these languages.

As stated by Ellis, Skehan, Shintani, & Lambert, (2019) language acquisition is a process that receipts in the brains of children when he gets his first language or mother tongue. Language acquisition is usually distinguished from language learning. Language learning is related to the processes that occur when a person learns a second language after children have obtained his first language. So, language acquisition is related to the first language, whereas language learning is related to the second language.

According to VanPatten & Wulff (2020), learning is the acquisition of knowledge or skills through a process of learning and experience. Whereas language learning, as one of the complex problems of human's language activity that does not only yield mechanically but also takes place mentally (Woumans, et al, 2019). Therefore, concerning language learning, linguistic studies need to be supplemented by interdisciplinary studies between linguistics and psychology, commonly called psycholinguistics. The discussion about language acquisition is closely related to how humans can perceive and then understand the speech of others.

Moreover, learning itself is a system. That is, learning is a single unit consisting of various components that support each other (Spinner & Gass, 2019). The success learning of language will be determined by the components involved in the learning itself. These components are the teacher, students, learning objectives, learning materials, learning methods and techniques, evaluations, and tools is needed. Likewise, in language learning, these components must be considered. The statement above suggests that especially language learning, it is not only the teacher and language learning material factors that must be considered, but students as a learner should also be considered for the success of learning of foreign language.

Furthermore, processability theory according to Pienemann (1998, 2005, 2008, 2011, and 2015) is part of a cognitive approach that aims to improve understanding of how to acquire a second language acquisition, restructuring the knowledge system between languages. Pienemann theory relates to the development of second language skills. The provision of language with special procedural is needed to master the target

language. Therefore, it is very important to understand the process of acquiring vocabulary, sentence structures of target language both in spoken and written language.

Processability theory aims to develop hypotheses about the universal hierarchy of acquisition of foreign language that related to the specific procedural skills to a target language. The Processability theory is managed by an existing language processor framework (Pienemann 1998, 2005, 2008, 2011, 2015). In this way, one can predict the stages of language skills, and testing their reliability is easy to do empirically. It process as a means of expressing thoughts in written language that is intact grammatically, the unit of grammatical structures in a sentence as an important role in communication. Through correct word patterns, phrases, and sentences, communication can be established properly. Furthermore, the message that the writer or speaker wants to express can be conveyed correctly also to the reader or listener in communicating.

### **A problem in Foreign Language Learning**

As the common problem in language learners is referred to as a traditional approach (Bogulski, Bice, & Kroll. 2019). Likewise, in the process of learning English, a learner usually has experienced a problem. That could lead to less than optimal outcomes of learning a foreign language.

In deep, this can happen to anyone, including a student who learns English and non-English study program. Further, in the context of listening as Ahmadi & Keshmirshekan (2019) argues the common difficulties faced by foreign language learner are lack of understanding of spelling and pronunciation of the English language. In reading comprehension, the problems are in knowledge about reading material and ignorance of how to coherence ideas between a sentence with one another (Namaziandost, Ehsan, et al, 2019). Yet, Pimm (2019) argues difficulties when learners speaking English language area deficiency of English vocabulary, punctuation, and pronunciations. In writing skills are also important to master like sentence structure and grammatical context (see Hsu & Hu, 2019). Those activities required in the process of learning a foreign language are complex and systematic. However, the skill of that knowledge is needed to master to learn a foreign language.

In certainly encourages a teacher to give critical attention to the conditions of the learner followed by readiness in the implementation of learning (Mayo, 2019). In other words, without more careful preparation, learning activities will be not effective. The preparation can be seen from the lesson plan, media, material, and assessment. So, by understanding the problems faced by a student, the instructor could be reflected themselves to know how effective the implementation in the foreign language process.

Moreover, a problem in language learning is not only found at the elementary, secondary, and colleges level of educational context. As several studies have been proven by (Bahmani & Farvardin, 2017). That research shows not only student who learn English as a subject language but also each student who have an interest in different field of science are also faced difficulties in learning a foreign language. The learner who does not have a background in language knowledge gained from elementary school to high school will feel burdened in acquiring a foreign language (O'G'Li, & Muzaffarovna, 2019). So, as the previous research, English learners who do not explore knowledge in their fields study (ESP learner) have the potential to produce a variety of responses in foreign learning processes. That means it could not be separated from the problems that will ascend in second language acquisition. Therefore in this article, the researcher is interested in digging deeper into language acquisition theory (Processbality Theory) by Manfred Pienemann (1998, 2005, 2008, 2011, and 2015)

which is showing part of a cognitive approach that aims to improve understanding of how to acquire a second language acquisition.

### **Processability Theory**

In discussing specifically Processability Theory. It is a good example of a cognitive approach to SLA, where the focus is on the learning process. Processability theory assumes that the computational mechanism for mother tongue acquisition (L1), second language acquisition (L2), for either adult or child learners are the same, since basic processing parameters such as word access and also the linearization problem (Pienemann, 2015).

Processability theory is to construct hypotheses about the hierarchy of universal language that related to the specific procedural skills to mastering the target language. The acquisition of a foreign language is managed by an existing language improvement process (Pienemann 1998, 2005, 2008, 2011, 2015). In this way, people might predict the acquisition of language targets as abilities to do empirically. The processability theory means an analysis of the cognitive approach in the language such as; grammatically and unit of language structures that is an important role in communication. Through word patterns, phrases, and sentences that are following the second language that has been improved. So, the message writer or speaker wants to convey could be provided correctly to the reader or listener.

#### ***Hypothesis Processability Theory (PT)***

“At any stage of development, the learner can produce and comprehend only those L2 linguistic forms which the current state of the language processor can handle.” (Pienemann 2008, 9) .

In this context Pienemann (2008) requirements to develop a universal theory that can "predict the trajectory of development for a second language". Based on the PT, the sequence of procedural language acquisition is for several languages. Only other languages are dissimilar, for example, German and Japanese which are typologically different. This principle in this theory is called a plausible typology from PT. However, every language learner tends to remember several variations in language acquisition.

Each language learner has variations in learning a second language and follows rules in developing target language. Thus, the acquisition of a language consists of stages starting from the formation of sentences, stratified sentences, and so on. PT aims to determine the sequence in which the learner develops the target language by the sequence in which certain processing routines develop that are essential to handle the components of that language. The issue of learning a language should be solved by a mind that works within human psychological limits, not by an unconstrained computational system (Pienemann 1998, 2). According to PT, the processing component must be autonomous. For example in the following sentence in English:

*(1) Before the girl left the house, she made a phone call.*

For example (1) linearization problems are often found in morphosyntax. the verb and subject must be under the grammatical rules of the English language. In this case, the grammatical of the verb and the subject are first stored in memory. In grammatical processing has access in the brain based on grammatical memory (Pienemann 2013). Certain grammar information must be saved before it can be processed (for instance: information about verbs such as people and numbers).

*(2) Little Peter goes home*

To make grammatically correct sentences, the subject and verb, which have two different phrases, must contain the grammatical information of the third person. In that

phrase, the noun *Little Peter* is an element that must be matched. In this case, the language processor verifies whether the two elements are displayed based on correct grammatical rules of English. Only if the second language learner has obtained the right procedure could build phrases that are by the rules of the language target. According to (Buyl & Housen, 2015) this procedure consists of storing and comparing grammar information. Then, the second language learner can distinguish between those are grammatically appropriate and those are not. For example, the sentence *Little Peter goes home* grammatically is considered wrong by students who have not fully mastered the sentence. The process of matching grammar information between elements in phrases and sentences is called Lexical-Functional.

The hierarchy between matching grammatical information has been distinguished by Pienemann. Noun phrases like *two children* are generated before verb phrases like *Little Peter goes home*. The processability hierarchy, which is the basis of Processability Theory, consists of five levels of processing. Five levels are represented in Table 1 and applied to English L2.

Table 1: Processing Procedures applied to English

Processing levels	L2 process	Morphology
Word/lemma	Words	Invariant forms
Category procedure	Lexical morpheme	Plural
Phrasal procedure	Phrasal information	NP agreement
Sentence procedure	Interphrasal information	SV agreement
Subordinate clause procedure	Main and subordinate clause	

(Pienemann 2015)

Pienemann (2013) claims that "the hierarchy is arranged implicitly". This means that certain procedures can only be obtained if the previous procedure has been internalized. For example, L2 English students cannot produce a plural noun phrase (NP) agreement. When the student must produce a different structure at a level of processing that he has not yet reached, the structure will be avoided or certain elements will be abandoned. Then, the order of time in language acquisition is reflected in the hierarchy. In other words, language learners cannot choose different ones based on the order of acquisition in the L2 hierarchy. For instance, an L2 learner is impossible to make phrases without first obtaining words.

Furthermore, the processability hierarchy predicts language learners to the definite sequence following the procedures of the language in which they are instructed (Pienemann, 2015). However, in the development sequence of grammar that has been studied, it still allows space to be analyzed for errors in grammatical processing. Because language learners are limited to follow the ability of the hierarchical process of language in imprisoning, they can only produce structures that they have obtained in accordance with the Procedure. However, language learners always try to find solutions to these structures which they have not yet acquired (Taki & Hamzehian, 2016). An example is the formation of WH-questions in English. Putting "*tobe*" in the second position, as in the following example.

(3) *Where he has been?*

*He has been where?*

As students have to form WH-questions they have in building alternative structures are very limited. That shows constraints created by the hierarchy produce by students to avoid certain structures (Van Vlack, 2008).

### **Changes to Grammatical Information**

The processability hierarchy is related to the principle of grammatical information exchange or the merging of features, which means that grammatical information between elements in a sentence is complemented or put together. Pienemann (2008, 19) states that "each entry in the learner's mental lexicon needs to be annotated for specific features of the target language". For example, *Lemma Peter* is referred to as a single noun. The grammar information that is established in different processes, could be distinguished. Table 2 shows three different types of unification of features, accompanied by examples from English.

Table 2: Types of feature unification

1. <i>No exchange of grammatical information</i>	<i>Lexical morphemes</i>	<i>Past -ed</i>
2. <i>Exchange of grammatical information within the phrase</i>	<i>Phrasal morphemes</i>	<i>Plural -s</i>
3. <i>Exchange of grammatical information within the sentence</i>	<i>Interphrasal morphemes</i>	<i>Third-person</i>

(Pienemann 2015)

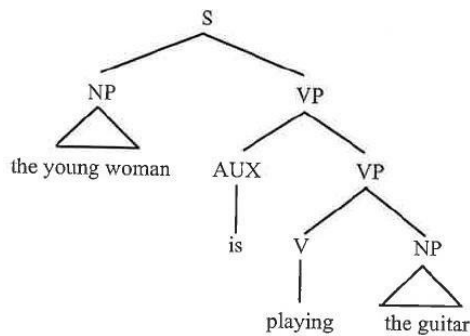
These types affect the hierarchy of PT. The first type of processing does not depend on temporary storage (for example morphological marking of verbs). Past tense marking in English (for example wait-ed) has become part of the verb lemma and no phrasal procedure is needed in this process. Pienemann calls this lexical morpheme class. Second, phrasal morphemes require the exchange of grammatical information in certain phrase elements. An example is a noun phrase (NP) *a child* where agreement between nouns and determiners is mandatory. Thus, the single diacritical feature of *the child* as a noun must be constructed in the NP procedure. The last type of grammatical information, these interphrasal morpheme classes, as placed on the subject verbs depend on the S-procedure. As long as the verb lemma is not activated, the subject's diacritical features must be constructed in the S-procedure (Pienemann 1998).

As mentioned above, a clear correlation can be seen between the unification of features and the processability hierarchy. The hierarchy represents the order of time determined by the type of pooling feature. Second language learners will first obtain procedures that do not require the exchange of grammar information, followed by a structure with the exchange of grammatical information in phrases in sentences (Taki & Hamzehian, 2016). This hierarchy is universal and can be applied to any language. For example, student EFL first obtains the plural (+ s) before learning how to form verbs in the singular present third-person form.

### **Lexical Functional Grammar**

In this context, lexical functional grammar (LFG) is determined by many factors as Pienemann explained. First, the PT hierarchy depends on the concept of uniting features and this concept is also a central idea in (LFG). The concept of uniting features is very important in PT because the constituent structure represents the structural relationship between sentence constituents and reflects the sentence hierarchy. Unlike the f-structure, the c-structure contains the special characteristics of language because each language regulates its constituents in its way. For example, the order of constituents in English subject + verb + object (SVO) while the positions of S, V, and O in Latin are relatively free. The c-structure is represented by the phrase-structure, as in Figure 3.

Figure 3: *The Young Woman is Playing The Guitar*



Structure-a connects structure-f with thematic structures (i.e levels that reflect the essence of the sentence). The point has a specific role, which is lexically determined by the meaning of the verb. For example, transitive verbs require two core arguments, the subject (someone who eats) and the object (what is eaten). These agent and theme predicate arguments often relate to the functions of subjects and objects, as in the following example below.

(4) *EAT*<*xy*> = ' somebody *EAT**S*something' [*agent*]  
           [*theme*]                  *EATER*  *VERBOBJECTEATEN*

According to LFG, the a-structure is first mapped to the f-structure, which is then mapped to the c-structure. The mapping between the three structures is not a sequential process but occurs simultaneously. In conclusion, the f-structure represents functions in a sentence while the c-structure sees the relationship between constituents. The role of the argument from constituents lies in structure-a. When canonical word structures are produced, a direct mapping between the three structures is used.

Pienemann described this concept as follows: direct mapping occurs when (structure-a) is mapped to the subject (structure-f) and this subject is in turn mapped to NPsubj in the first position (structure-c). However, the relationship between structures a, c, and f is not always linear. If not, it is impossible to make a speech that deviates from the canonical word order. However, learners can still say active and passive sentences, affirmative and declarative sentences, etc. This device in language production is needed to attract the attention of listeners (Buyl & Housen, 2015). But deviations from the canonical word order have consequences for language processing given that the relationships between three different structures are altered and produce linguistic non-linearity.

As mentioned above, the first type of deviation is induced by mapping c- to f-structures. The canonical structure deviation is caused by the addition of adjuncts and by assigning discourse functions (focus and topic) to the constituents in the sentence.

(5) *Helikes Anne.*

(6) *Anne, helikes.*

For example (5), there is a one-to-one relationship between structures c and f because the first NP represents the subject. For example (6), Anne's object is located in the first position. This type of non-linearity (6) results from mapping the structure of non-canonical arguments (structure-a) to structure-f and involves extraordinary lexical entry, passivity, and causal construction.

### Lexical Mapping Hypothesis

In contrast to the previous hypothesis, the Lexical Mapping Hypothesis (LMH) focuses on the Lexis mapping that describes the relationship between grammatical functions and the role of arguments (Pienemann, Kessler, & Itani-Adams, 2011). The LMH hypothesis states that in the initial stages, only the default mapping occurs from a to f-structures. Deviations from the default mapping that create non-linearity imply the addition of mapping principles and lexical entries. When the a-structure is changed, the

a- to f-structure mapping	Structural outcomes
Non-default mapping. (single clause)	Complex predicates e.g. Causative (in Romance languages, Japanese, etc.), raising, light verbs.
↑	↑
Non-default mapping. (single clause)	Passive
↑	Exceptional verbs

learner cannot produce the structure that has been marked. Learners only map the role of their arguments in a canonical way. Passive construction in English is a good example where changes between structures a and f are considered. The relationship between the grammatical function and the role of the argument is influenced by removing or changing the position of the role of the argument. As an example the following sentence.

(7) *Peter sees a dog.*  
*see <experiencer, theme>*  
       /      /  
       SUBJ   OBJ

(8) *A dog is seen by Peter. seen*  
*<experiencer, theme>*  
       /   /  
       ∅          SUBJ   (ADJ)

(Pienemann et al. 2005, 241-242)

The first sentence is an example of the default mapping, which can be seen in the order of canonical words. But in the second sentence, passive construction, the relationship between the role of argument and the function of grammar is changed. *A dog*, which is an OBJ of an active sentence, becomes a SUBJ of a passive sentence. The a-structure may also be affected by the lexicon (i.e, lexical entry). Certain lexical items require the role of certain arguments. The third type of non-default mapping between structures and f is realized by causative construction. Examples of the different phases of nonlinearity induced by a-to-f structure mapping are given in Figure 4.

Figure 4: Lexical Mapping Hypothesis

Default mapping, i.e. Most prominent thematic role	↑ Canonical Order
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(Pienemann et al. 2015)

## CONCLUSION

This part deals with a conclusion, for the next researcher who is interested to research in the processability theory field as this study. It is suggested for the researchers to analyze such as conversation, dialogues, and written in a foreign language learner more deeply in terms of investigating a problem in foreign language learning with different theories. Then for linguistic, especially those interested in processability theory, more lectures on language acquisition should be provided, particularly in foreign language learners. It might useful to researchers and learners to enrich knowledge about processability theory in the acquisition of a foreign language. By using Pienemann's processability theory, in interpreting the problem of language learning, People not only depend on the literal meaning of their terms but also know what they want to do with them, the structural and social background in which linguistic activity takes place by implementing the principle of processability theory that suggested in the theory.

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