



# Mentalo-Behaviorist Approach to Language Acquisition

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**Abstract:** Knowledge of language has been one of the most complicated and abstracted concepts human research has come across. Probably no other issue has been investigated in much the same way as human language and its acquisition. So many facts have been discovered, yet, more are still mysterious as to how, when and what factors that contribute to the success or failure of this process (Shormani, 2014). Thus, I present a theoretical account of how language, be it first language (L1) or second language (L2), is acquired. Two most influential theories, namely, *Behaviorism* and *Mentalism*, and how each alone fails to account for L1 and L2 acquisition, have been thoroughly discussed. Thus, in this article, I propose a novel theory to language acquisition (LA), based on both the mental properties (the Universal Grammar (UG), i.e. the Initial State of the Language Faculty (=FL) every child is tacitly, innately and biologically endowed with, and environmental properties (the ritualized linguistic and nonlinguistic input the child is exposed to), and name it *Mentalo-behaviorist Approach*, suggesting, in addition to UG, an *Environmental Orienting System* (=EOS), which provides the child with the necessary linguistic input, as an Activator/Trigger, whose function is to activate/trigger UG universal properties, for LA process to take place. In the case of L1, EOS functions as an activator with respect to UG *principles* and as a trigger with respect to its *parameters*. In the case of L2 acquisition, however, EOS reactivates the former and reactivates and retriggers (resets) the latter. EOS's activating and triggering in the case of L1 acquisition is due to the fact that the child's initial state (the "in-built" UG) is still intact, resembling the new bought "computer's half-installed operating system." However, in the case of L2 acquisition, EOS's reactivating and retriggering is because learner's UG properties have already been involved in acquiring an already existing language and need to be reactivated and retriggered (i.e. parametric-resetting), fitting the language being acquired. Thus, hypothesizing an equalized (mentalo-behaviorist) portion makes the proposed approach surpass any other existing theory to language acquisition in its two spheres (i.e. L1 and L2).

**Keywords:** Language Acquisition, Behaviorism, Mentalism, Interactionism, UG, EOS, Mentalo-behaviorist Approach

## 1. Introduction

Language acquisition is one of the most crucial, controversial and hot-debated topics, attracting so much of researchers, linguists and teachers' interest, probably no other topic has aroused such controversy (Shormani, 2012, 2014; Long, 2003; Gass and Selinker 2008, among so many others). Different types of theories such as behaviorism, mentalism, interactionism, etc. have tried to explain it, deeply probing its mysterious nature, success and/or failure. Possessing a language is the quintessentially human trait, i.e. all normal humans speak while nonhumans do not. Language is the main means by means of which we know about other peoples' thoughts. Every time humans speak, they are revealing something about language, and hence, the facts of language structure are easy to come by. Nonetheless, while learning a first language is something every child does successfully, in a matter of a few years and without the need for formal lessons, L2 acquisition seems to be of a more mysterious nature. Questions as to how, when, where and what factors that affect such a process, among others, have been investigated by a great number of researchers and have been the main focus of theoretical, applied, neuro- and socio-linguistics, yet, arriving at no consensus. Arriving at no consensus, in principle, signals the difficulty of the subject matter involved in such an investigation. In fact, due to being a complex process, LA has not been fully accounted for yet, there are as many secrets remaining as there are many facts that have been discovered. There are also specific conditions that have to be attained in order for humans (young or adult) to learn to speak. For instance, to acquire a language, a child cannot be deaf because exposure to linguistic input plays a major role in the LA process. Moreover, the exposure to language needs to occur before certain age; otherwise, no oral communication will take place as in the case of "Genie" who has been found at the age of 13 or so (Curtiss, 1977). However, it should be



noted here that this is not to be overlapped with nonverbal languages like *Sign Language* (SLg) where nonverbal linguistic symbols (signs) involved exclude some human traits like *hearing* in SLg acquisition. Thus, in this article, I present a theoretical perspective of how language, be it L1 or L2, is acquired. Two most influential theories, namely, *Behaviorism* and *Mentalism* and how each alone fails to account for L1 and L2 acquisition facts have been thoroughly discussed. Thus, I propose a novel theory based on both the mental properties, i.e. the UG, or the Initial State of the FL every child is tacitly, innately and biologically endowed with, and environmental properties (the ritualized linguistic and nonlinguistic input the child is exposed to), and name it *Mentalo-behaviorist Approach*. I propose, in addition to UG, an *Environmental Orienting System* (an environment-orienting procedure), which provides the child with the necessary linguistic input, as an Activator/Trigger, whose function is to activate/trigger UG universal properties, for LA process to take place, and contrasting it with socio-constructivist approaches like *interactionism*. In the case of L1, EOS functions as an activator with respect to UG *principles* and as a trigger with respect to its *parameters*. In the case of L2, acquisition, however, EOS reactivates the former and reactivates and retriggers the latter to fit the L2 UG properties.

## 2. The Nature of Human Language

The very feature of human beings is the fact that they live together, and no one can live alone. Therefore, a human being has been defined as a social creature. The term “social” in itself features human beings and implies that they live in a society where they share thoughts, beliefs, cultural aspects, opinions, traditions, customs, etc. They also exchange such things in addition to knowledge, wishes, commands, feelings, thanks, declarations and promises. If this is true, it follows that there must be a system for such an exchange to take place. We rightly say that people communicate in their daily life activities through speech, but is speech a system? In fact, speech is a tool within a larger system called *language*, still, what is a language? Traditionally, *language* is defined as a conventional system of sounds which people of a particular community use to communicate. Based on *sound system*, this definition seems to Sapir (1921, p. 3) unsatisfactory for there is something that “prevents” language to be as such, viz. “an instinctive basis that it does not really possess.” So, does it to Wayne (2007, p. 3) who, based on meaning, defines language as a system of “symbols that convey meaning, plus rules for combining those symbols.” Based on syntax, Chomsky (1957, p. 2) considers language “to be a set (finite or infinite) of sentences, each finite in length and constructed out of a finite set of elements” where he means by the latter just the rules which govern such constructions.

All definitions, except Chomsky’s, view language as a means of communication. However, there are certain facts that prevent language from being merely a means of communication. In this regard, Chomsky (2002) believes that language is much more complex than being just a means of communication. According to Chomsky, the existence of properties like *ambiguity* makes us rethink such definitions. We usually communicate and say things that turn out to be simple and fall short to express what we actually want. If language were a means for communication *per se*, it could have been much simpler than what it really is (cf. Chomsky, 2000; Shormani, to appear). We also say an utterance, a phrase and/or even a sentence and we mean something else. An example of this is that when you ask someone to lift a heavy table but he/she could not, then you will say: “Oh, you are *very strong!*” while what you really mean is that he/she is *very weak*. Language is a rule-governed system controlled by contextualization. For instance, any piece of language may mean something in one context but something else in another context. For example, the word “Hello” may be used to draw someone’s attention, to ask who is there, to greet someone, to express dislike among other uses and meanings accompanied with linguistic factors, i.e. vocal but non-verbal factors like *intonation*, *stress*, etc. and non-linguistic factors, paralinguistic factors like the tone of voice. This is just for the word, or more specifically the utterance, “Hello”, let alone a complete sentence. In addition, signs play a crucial role in communication as well. For example, the sign used for *winking* can be used for several communicative functions like calling someone to follow you, to warn someone from an expected danger and so on. In addition, a combination of paralinguistic and facial gestures can communicate or convey meaning more than what words, phrases and/or sentences can. What is more is that language can be used as a tool for treatment

(medicine) as in the case of treating *psychic patients*. In addition to what has been said about language, some researchers (e.g. Newmark, 1981) go even further to believe that language is a container of human culture, traditions, ethics and heritage.

Thus, defining language merely in terms of communication is not satisfactory in almost all cases. Accordingly, a working definition for language, and hence, in relation to different modules, I maintain, should cover all these properties. Thus, language can be defined as a *rule-governed complex but precise and concise system consisting of verbal and nonverbal symbols and signs shared by a group of people having multiple functions but not merely limited to communicating their ideas, thoughts and desires via words or a combination of such words into larger syntactic units* (most of **this section** has been taken from mine: Shormani, 2013b, p. 19ff).

### 3. Previous Approaches to Language Acquisition

Though there are several and diverse approaches to Second Language Acquisition (SLA), I mainly focus on two of the most controversial, namely, **behaviorism** and **mentalism** due to the fact that they are more relevant to my proposal. In addition, **interactionism** (a socio-constructivist approach) will be briefly shed light on, contrasting it with the theory proposed here, and pinpointing its failure in providing a reliable account for LA.

#### 3.1. Behaviorism

Behaviorism is a psycholinguistic approach to language acquisition, dominating the language acquisition scene in the 50s and 60s of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, viewing it as any other type of learning, i.e. as the formation of *habits* (Bloomfield, 1933; Skinner, 1957). This view, in fact, has initiated from work on psychology which sees learning of any kind of behavior as being based on the notion *Stimulus-Response-Reinforcement*. In this view, human beings have been regarded as being exposed to numerous stimuli in their environment to which they respond. The responses they give to such stimuli will be reinforced if successful, that is if some desired outcome is obtained (Shormani, 2014). Thus, L1 acquisition, from a behaviorist perspective, involves a process of “learning” a set of *habits* as humans respond to any stimuli in their environment by means of analogy. It is also based on the behaviorist “notion” that “practice makes perfect.” In other words, it is believed by behaviorists that the more one “repeats” a piece of language “stimulus,” it is likely that this piece of language will be mastered. Thus, according to behaviorism, when a child produces a linguistic expression, be it a word, phrase or sentence, and this expression is correct, it will get reinforced. What is emphasized in behaviorism is that learning takes place by *conditioning* which may take two forms, viz. classical and operant. The former is defined as a process which associates a natural and existing stimulus with a previous and neutral one. The latter however, makes use of reinforcement and punishment factors to create some kind of associations between any behavior and its consequences. The concept of reinforcement may take different forms like a “bravo,” a laugh, a smile, and sometimes it might be a response to what a child utters by a parent, caretaker or anyone of those who are around him/her. For instance, when a child utters the word *water!* meaning *he/she is thirsty!* and gets a response to that utterance by having someone listen to such an utterance, and hence, bringing him/her “water,” he/she is reinforced. In other words, when a child utters the word *water* and gets a response and then reinforcement, he/she will intend to *repeat* such a process when needed in future-like situations and this takes the form of conditioning (Shormani, 2013b).

However, there are so many facts behaviorism fails to account for. As far as L2 acquisition is concerned, behaviorism views it as different from that of L1, and hence, the former has been seen as involving replacing the old linguistic set of *habits* (specifically those in L1) with new ones (those of L2) and hence running into problems because L2 learners have already a set of well-established linguistic responses in their native language. Indeed, the behaviorists maintain that L2 acquisition consists of learners trying to mimic what they hear from those around, and hence, develop habits in the second language they are acquiring by *routine practice*. Thus, they are actually thought of as relating what they have in L1 to what they process in L2 which results in *language transfer*, including both positive and negative. Positive transfer is a result of



similarities between the L1 and the L2, because habits used in the L1 easily transfer to the L2. Negative transfer, however, is caused by differences between the L1 and the L2, and hence, resulting in errors the main cause of which is using habits of L1 in L2 especially those which do not exist in L2. What this means is that those old linguistic *habits* will intervene either facilitating or disfacilitating the acquisition process. In other words, when the L1 structures are the same like those of L2, acquisition will take place without any difficulty but if not, it will be the otherwise (cf. Lado, 1957, p. 58f).

In addition, the behaviorist view has failed to account for the fact that there are certain points of difference between L1 and L2 but not disfacilitating learning and there are certain similarities between both languages and yet not facilitating learning. Thus, consider the differences between English and French, the similarities between English and German, it is expected, according to behaviorism, that the English learner of French will commit an error in French while the same learner will not commit such an error in German. Now, the English learner of French as an SL will produce the French sentence *\*je suis douze* intending to say *I am twelve years old* whose French equivalent is *j'ai douze ans* meaning *I have twelve years*. Now, consider the same learner who will produce the same sentence in German *Ich bin zwölf Jahre alt* meaning exactly *I am twelve years old*. Now, according to the behaviorist view of language acquisition, the German structure is much easier than that of French because German structure is like that of English while the French one is not, and hence, quicker to learn than the French one. Therefore, on the basis of the behaviorist view of L2 acquisition, the English structure has two functions: as facilitator as in the case of learning German and inhibitor as in the case of French. However, what the facts show is the otherwise. In other words, French learners of English never produce such structures as *I have twelve years* but rather produce *I am twelve years old* because what can account for the same reason behind the committing of such an error by an English learner learning French can account for the same phenomenon regarding the French learner learning English. In fact, behaviorism may succeed in accounting for committing an error in the example above by English learner learning French but fails to account for why such an error by a French learner learning English, which is much expected, is not committed.

However, with the emergence of mentalism, a biological approach initiated by linguists like Chomsky and Lenneberg in the early sixties, behaviorism has been criticized and even refuted for being unable to account for the linguistic creativity of children in producing pieces of language they have never heard or come across (cf. Chomsky, 1959). Language is productive, creative, stimulus-free, species-specific, rule-governed and can never be said to be acquired by processing a large corpus of language, and hence, children acquiring their first language do not by any means learn and produce a large set of sentences (i.e. corpus). Rather, they create sentences they have never learned, heard and/or come across before. In addition, it is implausible to compare humans, highly intelligent creatures, in their learning of their language, a very complicated and abstracted system, to animals like “rats” learning to perform simple tasks in labs. Behaviorism also fails to account for the occurrence of such ungrammatical pieces of language as *\*Daddy goed* and *\*Jane breaked* in children’s language. In fact, all these questionable issues, in addition to a considerable number of questions that remain unanswered, have led to seeking an alternative approach or framework in which we could find plausible answers to such questions.

### 3.2. *Mentalism*

Mentalism, a biological approach to LA (Chomsky, 1965, and later work), comes as a fierce response to behaviorism, revealing its inadequacy and failure in accounting for linguistic data produced by children which is not in the input they are exposed to. Since behaviorism is based on ‘nurture’, i.e. how environmental factors shape learning, researchers abandon it and rather look at ‘nature’, i.e. the role of innate properties of human mind in shaping learning (Shormani, 2012, to appear). Apart from its failure in accounting for the occurrence of some ungrammatical pieces of language, there are many questions that remain difficult for behaviorism to answer as to how children acquire their mental grammar spontaneously and without formal training, how is it that a child in that early age is able to acquire such an abstract data like wh-questions in English, for instance, how children of the same speech community reliably learn the same grammar, how a child from a Yemeni-Arabic, Hindi, English, etc. background can acquire Japanese, even if



it is exposed to Japanese linguistic input, how is that a child in a matter of twelve-to-eighteen months can acquire this complicated system? All these questions among many others lead to what is known as a nativist-in-orientation framework referred to as *mentalism* where many things are emphasized like the fact that human language is species-specific, i.e. only human beings are predisposed with a set of specifications, known as language universals, enabling them to acquire language.

### 3.2.1. Universal Grammar

Answers to the questions stated above have been difficult within frameworks like the behaviorist. However, within a framework like mentalism, and hence, UG, answering such questions, seems possible. However, one badly needs to know what this UG is, what constitutes it, how it is predisposed and wired onto the child's brain among others. Now, from a biological approach to linguistics, UG is "the system of principles, conditions, and rules that are elements or properties of all human languages" (Chomsky, 1975, p. 29) and "is taken to be a characterization of the child's prelinguistic state" (Chomsky, 1981, p. 7) every child is genetically, tacitly, innately and biologically predisposed with. It is also "the black box responsible for language acquisition. It is the mechanism in the mind which allows children to construct a grammar out of the raw language materials supplied by their parents" (e.g. Cook, 1996, p. 292). It places limitations on grammars, constraining their form and the inventory of possible grammatical categories, i.e., syntactic, semantic, phonological, as well as how they operate. It also places limitations on the computational system ( $H_{CL}$ ) and the principles that the grammar is subject to. It consists of some language-universal and some language-specific rules. The former are known as *principles* and the latter *parameters*. The former are called universal in the sense that all languages possess them characterized as invariant. The latter are known as binary in nature, i.e. a parameter is a set of two choices as will be clarified below. Although some other theories like Government&Binding (GB), Minimalist Program (MP), or even Optimality Theory (OP) differ in accounting for concepts like principles and parameters, it is also noticed that there is some kind of consensus that there are some properties in human language being too abstract, subtle and complex (Chomsky, 1999). These properties are difficult to acquire without ascertaining the availability of innate, tacit, genetic and pre-equipped linguistic constraints (Cook, 1983, 2003).

How difficult structures are acquired and perhaps judged by a child in an early age when his/her mind is not matured enough to cope with abstract concepts has been resolved by UG. For instance, as far as English is concerned, children may not be able to learn the distinction between structures like *John is eager to please* and *John is easy to please* as there is a difference between both structures. While the former implies that *someone is to be pleased by John*, the latter, however, specifies that *it is John who is to be pleased*. Children then could have learned the difference between such structures by means of some properties of their own minds, viz. properties ascribed to UG (Cook, 1983). This also supports the claim that it is UG which compensates for the "poverty of the stimulus" and explains pieces of language occurring in the child's language though he/she has never heard or come across before.

As far as the universality of such grammar is concerned, a plausible interpretation could be that humans inherit language features or properties that are universal to all languages which make them able to learn any language they are exposed to sufficient linguistic input of that language. If this is true, it follows that UG consists not of a particular grammar or particular rules but of a set of principles that apply to all grammars and this proves it true why a child can acquire any language irrespective of whatever his/her mother tongue might be. It is widely held that UG is the 'guiding force' of L1 acquisition made use of by children. UG as a theory of acquisition is characterized by the fact that it encompasses two sets of abstract rules, viz. principles which are common to all languages and parameters which are language-specific as has been alluded to above. Thus, principles are part of the innate endowment predisposed in the human 'brain' as features of all natural languages. Such properties can be exemplified by the principles, *Structure-Dependency*, *Head Principle* and *Subject Principle* as follows: the first principle specifies that language is organized and this organization is based on the relationship among elements in the sentence. In other words, what constitutes a sentence is words, phrases and/or clauses organized systematically and hierarchically which seems to be



common to (and proves true of) all natural languages. The second states that every phrase must have a head and the third states that every clause must have a subject. Parameters, on the other hand, are specifications of such principles which are *language-specific*. In that, a parameter has two values and each language chooses one of these two values. For instance, the *Head-Parameter* states that a language is either *head-first* or *head-last* with respect to phrase structuring. For instance, English and Arabic choose to be *head-first* languages while Japanese is a *head-last* one. *Subject-Parameter* states that a subject be either overt or covert. For instance, Arabic and Italian are *pro-drop* languages while English is not. *Pro-drop* languages are those which allow the subject of a finite clause to be covert.

From a UG perspective, L1 acquisition is a process of “parameter setting” making use of choosing either of two choices. Principles are not supposed to be learned by children simply because they are “instilled” (e.g. wired) in their brains. This process begins when the child starts acquiring his/her L1 and continues to do so. On the other hand, SLA takes place in a period when the *black box* is not “empty.” In other words, SLA comes when there is already an existent language in the brain. Several linguists (e.g. Ellis, 1997; Gass & Selinker, 2008; Brown, 1974, 1994; Chun, 1980; Schachter 1990; Dulay *et al.*, 1982; Saviile-Troike, 2006, Shormani, 2012, among others) see SLA as a process necessitated by the great need of globalization and much desire to know the “Other” (see sections 5&6).

#### 4. Questionable Issues

Based on the above review of behaviorism and mentalism, there are two major questions to be addressed. The first is that can behaviorism alone be a theory for language acquisition? The second question is whether UG *per se* is an adequate theory for acquiring a language. Regarding the first question, the answer is simple and has been stated above, and how behaviorism fails to account for facts makes us conclude, though there is an important role played by environment in LA, be it of L1 or L2, that behaviorism alone is an unreliable theory. Regarding the second, a plausible answer to this question requires us to look again at the nature of UG and LAD. In fact, UG is just part of LAD. In addition to UG, LAD contains learning principles, processing principles, triggering algorithms, etc. In fact, there is some kind of overlap in the use of both terms, i.e. LAD and UG. Though some scholars (e.g. Radford, 1997, 2004; Kremers, 2003) use both terms interchangeably, to me, as it stands, LAD is considered to be more than simply UG.

Now, if we look at the development of UG, (as a theory of LA), it has passed through several stages, and what was true in its very stages is not so now. In fact, much of the work on the role of UG in language acquisition, be it L1 or L2, has been formulated under the GB theory, i.e. in the 80s. However, changes have been recurrent in linguistic theory from that time. Those properties, where GB accounts for them in terms of principles, have been tackled differently under minimalism. Parameters get more constrained more than they are in GB due to their association with variation in the lexicon. In minimalism, the computational system ( $H_{CL}$ ) is 'given' by UG and is invariant. What varies is properties of the items that enter into the computation, their feature composition and feature strength, for example. Such changes in linguistic theory, hence in the definition of UG, should be seen as a matter of major concern. What makes minimalism different from previous approaches to generative syntax is the fact that it eliminates complexities and defines linguistic pieces of language as optimal realizations resulting from interaction between LF and PF levels of representation where the derivational economy principles determine their optimality, which, in principle, enable the computational system to select from a set of derivations the optimal ones (Chomsky, 1999; Hornstein, 1995; Kremers, 2003). The fact that there are constant revisions to theoretical analyses of these properties is tangential being a reflection of normal development and growth within linguistic theory (see Chomsky, 2000, 2005, 2008). What does not change, to some extent, is theoreticians' view of what the problematic data are that require postulation of innate principles and parameters in the first place.

In addition, Chomsky makes a distinction between competence and performance. To him, performance is what people actually say, which is often ungrammatical, whereas competence is what they instinctively have of the syntax of their L1 and this is, more or less, equated with the UG (Chomsky, 1965, 2005) but performance rarely mirrors competence, if not at all (Hymes, 1972), and sometimes it is possible to perform



without competence (Clark, 1974). Further, Chomsky focuses on structure of language, ignoring the things that people actually say. He appears to reduce language to its grammar. He seems to regard semantics (meaning) as a secondary element focusing mainly on syntax. For instance, a sentence such as *Colorless green ideas sleep furiously* may be considered part of the English language, for it is syntactically grammatical, and therefore, worth of study by *generative syntacticians*. A sentence such as *My brother, she no cook food*, on the other hand, is of no interest to the Chomskyan school. What Chomsky does is disregard meaning, and hence, the social situation in which language is normally acquired and/or produced. Specifically, Chomsky disregards the situation (environment) in which the child learns his first language albeit somewhere else he attributes 'unwillingly' very little to situation (i.e. environment) in language acquisition (Cook, 1983; Shormani, 2012).

Moreover, if one considers the example cited by Bruner (1983) of a well-known childhood game in which the mother, or other caretaker, disappears and then reappears, one is likely to find out the role played by the environment. Though this is ritual, which at first may be accompanied by simple noises, or *Bye-bye ... Hello*; later, it takes place by longer expressions and comments differentiating between separation and return. In that, he/she is offered a context within which language, charged with emotive content, may be acquired. It is this reciprocal and affective nature of language that Chomsky has been deemed to leave out of his hypotheses and theories. In addition, we cannot adopt the view raised by Piaget who argues that language is simply one manifestation acquired as a stage in general cognitive development: no special mechanism is therefore required to account for L1 acquisition (Kivinen & Ristelä, 2003).

The issue of whether L2 learners (i.e. adults) have access to UG has been controversial, though it has been proved true by a considerable number of researchers and linguists (White, 2003; Han, 2004; Shormani, 2012, among others). Now, let's address such questions again. In other words, let's seek answers to questions as to whether L2 learners still have access to UG principles and parameters. And, if so, what type of access they may still have, i.e. is the access they still have to UG principles and parameters the same like that when they first acquired their L1? This also leads to another question, i.e. should different properties associated with a specific UG principle or parameter necessarily emerge in L2 learners' linguistics system (i.e. interlanguage, henceforth IL) at more or less the same time or could they appear at different points of IL development? For instance, hierarchal structuring, a property of *Structure-dependency principle*, emerges later than *pro-dropping* property of the *subject principle*, and specifying the head, a property of *head parameter*, emerges earlier than *Head Movement Constraint*, a property of the same *parameter* (Chomsky, 1995). Further, a question also remains crucial, i.e. do L2 learners still have a mental representation which exceeds L2 input? And if so, is it possible that L1 as an alternative source of such knowledge be eliminated (White, 2003)? White goes even further saying that UG strongly operates in SLA, questioning, however, the issue of whether the L2 properties could not have been learned from the input *per se* or from input plus non-domain-specific learning principles or from the L1 grammar *per se*. Further, Gass & Selinker (2008) have noted the Learnability Hypothesis, where UG manifests itself vividly in L2 acquisition. What they mean by this is that UG as a theory of language acquisition provides universal principles as "part of the mental representation of language and it is this mental grammar which mediates between the sound and meaning of language" (p.160). The theoretical framework of UG addresses L1 and L2 acquisition processes due to offering an explanatory adequacy in its formulation of linguistic universals and crosslinguistic variation and its impressive predictive power regarding certain processes of LA. It has also been questioned whether linguistic properties that appear not related can be shown to derive from one, or from the interaction of more than one principle or parameter. In fact, the availability of these UG properties to adult learners when acquiring L2 makes accounting for L2 acquisition process considerably easier and fully reliable (Shormani, 2012), and so, I maintain that UG's role in SLA cannot be dispensed with.

Another issue worth addressing is the difference between L1 and L2 acquisition processes which seems harder to maintain. In other words, many properties of UG will necessarily manifest themselves in the L1 in some form. However, if L1 and L2 differ only in terms of surface properties, then it follows that to rule out transfer at this level as the mere explanation of what is going on is possible (Long, 2003). A number of



researchers have proposed a 'no parameter resetting' hypothesis, whereby L2 learners are subject to UG principles but cannot reset parameters (Long, 2003; White, 2003). However, to me, if this is true, *then how is it that after making errors, an L2 learner internalizes the L2 linguistic system and builds up rules correcting such errors the more he/she gets advanced?* The mere explanation to this issue is that such a learner is actually resetting parameterized preset rules (i.e. parameters). In fact, there is some kind of confusion regarding the terminology and consensus arising due to being related to L1 implications for UG involvement in LA process (White, 2003). For instance, terms like *direct access* and *full access* (White, 2003) to UG have been dealt with considerably. Some researchers (e.g. Cook, 1988, 2003; White, 2003), describing *Direct access*, maintain that L1 has nothing to do with learning L2 because of the independent way such learners access UG mental properties. It is also the instantiation of some kind of justifiable parameter settings where **L** has values from L1-Ln (White, 2003), and for some others (e.g. Shormani, 2012, 2013b), L2 learners still have access to UG principles and parameters, and direct or indirect access is determined by the way L2 linguistic input is presented to L2 learners. However, to me, L2 learners still have *full* direct access to UG principles and direct access to parameters where such access is determined by the way L2 linguistic input is presented to such learners in addition to other nonlinguistic factors like age, motivation, attitudes towards L2 and its speakers, interest, etc. It is in this perspective, we can account for L2 acquisition especially in native or non-native speaker ultimate attainment. *Else, how is it that L2 acquisition could be accounted for?* We cannot assume that L2 acquisition haphazardly takes place, or is learned in the form of analogic responses and/or conditioning, *it is rather very systematic and factor-sensitive*. The former is accounted for on the basis of some kind of mental properties and the latter on some environmental ones.

### 5. Mentalo-behaviorism Theory: A Proposal

Based on the above questionable issues, it seems that even UG, and hence, mentalism is not safe. In other words, as it apparently seems, what has been expressed by mentalism is not absolutely true. For instance, as Chomsky suggests UG, which, as has been discussed above, provides children with the genetic, innate and tacit specifications, but also fails to account for many cases like Genie's (Shormani, 2012), and hence, there must also be a portion assigned to environment or what the psychologist (Bruner, 1983) terms as Language Acquisition Support System (LASS). However, this portion is not to be underestimated or left uncertain as is the case in (Bruner, 1983). It is rather a vital role without which LA never takes place. Environment provides the child with 'ritualised scenarios,' the ceremony of having a bath, eating a meal, getting dressed, or playing a game, in which the stages of interaction are rapidly recognized and predicted by the infant. It is within such clear and emotionally charged contexts that the child first becomes aware of the way in which language is used. Parents' utterances are themselves ritualized, and accompany the activity in predictable and comprehensible ways. Gradually, the child moves from a passive position to an active one, taking over the movements of the caretaker, and, eventually, the language as well (Pinker, 1995, p. 33-35). In addition, LA is a hypothesis testing phenomenon (Cook, 1983), in which the child sets and resets the linguistic properties he/she has to "fix." "[A] child creates a hypothesis about the grammar more or less at random" (Cook, 1983, p.6), allowed by UG and, then, when he/she produces an utterance in accordance with this hypothesis, he/she will get a feedback from the surroundings whether from parents, caretakers or whosoever around, and this feedback will prove to him/her whether the produced utterance is correct or the otherwise. If this is true, how is it that such a vital role could be ignored or even underestimated? How is it that the child resets some properties he/she has been so persistent and resistant to (Carroll, 1996; Mitchell and Myles, 1998; Long, 2003; Clark, 2009)?

In fact, children cannot decide which hypothesis created by them is correct unless getting feedback from whosoever around, telling them whether or not a mistake has been committed, or even they discover such a mistake alone the more they get older, or when being able to internalize their L1 linguistic system. In other words, hypothesis creating and testing can be formulated only in later stages of acquisition, *otherwise how is it that a child may create hypotheses in an early stage when he is unable to deal with abstract concepts?* LA means that the child has to devise hypotheses compatible with the data presented to him and "must select from the store of potential grammars a specific one that is appropriate to the data available to him" (Cook, 1983, p. 6-7).





Thus, to me, as it seems, both the innate properties represented by UG and environmental ones are complementing each other. UG provides the language learner with the mental procedure necessary for language acquisition to take place, and environment provides a positive role in helping the learner “fix” the ways in which UG applies to the language he/she is learning (Cook, 1983). It determines the range of grammatical hypotheses that children entertain during LA and the procedure they use for evaluating input sentences given the fact that language consists of words and rules. The finite bulk of memorized words is called the mental lexicon, whereas the set of rules is called the mental grammar of a person. Thus, it is implausible to assume that UG alone or environment alone is a sufficient theory for either of them is not reliable for LA, simply because we cannot assume that the innate capacities are sufficient to make a child acquire his/her language without exposure to sufficient and efficient linguistic input. Rather, LAD or UG as a mental capacity needs some kind of linguistic orientation the source of which is nurture, i.e. environment, that guides or better *orients* this biologically endowed system, making it reach its ultimate goal, i.e. LA. This system can be called ***Environmental Oriented System*** (EOS). In other words, in addition to a theory of constraints on I-Language representation, i.e. UG, we need a theory of how that representation is acquired, thus, accounting for E-language and hence, a theory of LA, be it L1 or L2, specifying linguistic and nonlinguistic factors that contribute to the development of grammar in its “final state” and not merely Chomsky’s ‘initial state.’ In other words, we need a theory incorporating and accounting for both the I-language and E-language. The former is what constitutes  $H_{CL}$  encoded in, genetically endowed by, and tacitly predisposed to every human brain. The latter, however, is what constitutes the result of the former realized as language spoken and understood. We need, thus, a “perfect grammar” whose function is not only to produce well-formed pieces of language, but also enabling humans to understand such pieces if spoken to them. In addition, Chomsky (1965, p. 3) verifies the actual status of the *Initial State* as “an ideal speaker-listener in a completely homogenous speech community who knows its language perfectly” and not his/her E-language, i.e. what he/she says, i.e. performance, though the latter has been paid much attention to in recent work specifically regarding SLA (Shormani, in preparation). Human language has been investigated as a biological phenomenon, and “[e]mbedding the study of I-language in the biolinguistic framework is entirely natural; an individual’s language capacity is, after all, an internal property” which still persists. However, UG, as an internal and integrated part of human Language Faculty, and in its “technical sense” should “not be confused with descriptive generalizations” like those advocated in Greeberg’s universal Chomsky (2013, p. 36).

Thus, an adequate theory, to me, is one where there is some kind of incorporation between mental properties (i.e. UG properties) and the ritualized linguistic and nonlinguistic input (environmental properties), taking into account both the learner (his mental capacity) and the environment (the linguistic input), for either can never be dispensed with. It is also important that the incorporation is *equally sought*, and hence, the portion attributed to mental capacity should be the same like that to ritualized linguistic input, for the fact that *the latter rightly starts and continues from where the former stops*. Thus, the theory I am proposing here can be called ***Mentalo-behaviorist Approach*** based on integrating and incorporating UG and EOS properties as represented in Figure 1 below.

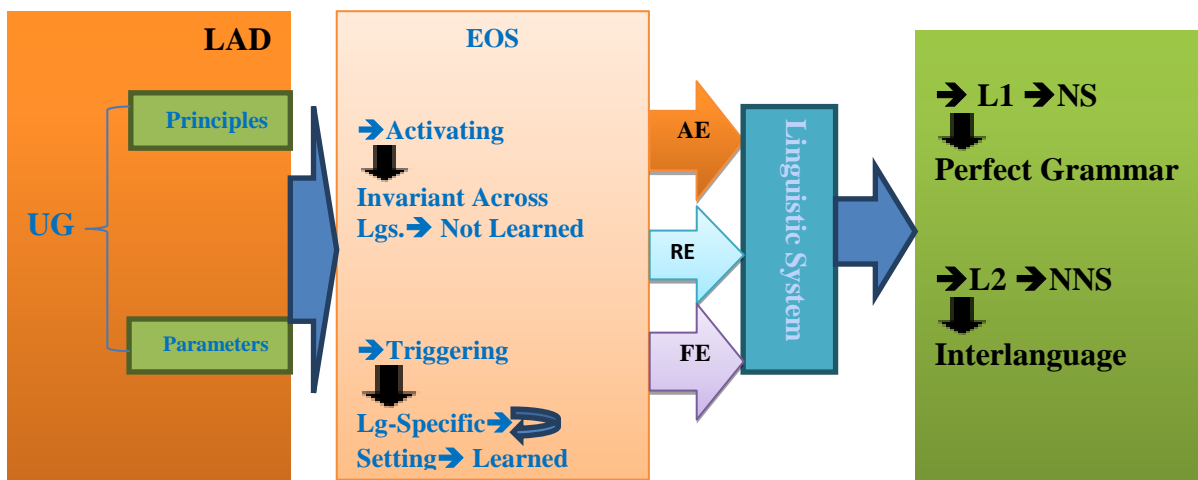


Figure 1: Mentalo-behaviorist Approach to Language Acquisition

In the approach I propose in Figure 1, LAD, through UG, integrates with EOS. The EOS takes one of three forms: Authentic Environment (AE), Real Exposure (RE) or Foreign Environment (FE) (I return to this point below). The integration brings about a linguistic system. This linguistic system takes two forms, viz. either L1, and this is in the case of a Native Speaker (NS) or L2 in the case of a Nonnative Speaker (NNS). In other words, the mental properties contained by LAD, specifically UG, which is manifested in the form of innate and universal (invariant across languages) rules, are called *principles* and those innate but language-specific are called *parameters*. What EOS does is that in the case of the former, it functions as an “activator,” in that, it activates these principles where the child has to respond to such activation and process such principles, and so, they are not supposed to be learned by him/her. In the case of the latter, i.e. parameters, and since they are language-specific, the EOS also activities and triggers them, and here processing them by the child needs to be learned. In that, since they are binary in nature, he/she has to set either setting. In fact, regarding parameter-setting, the vital role played by EOS can be summarized in the fact that it provides the child with either setting because both settings are part of the child’s genetic, biological and innate inheritance and what the child does is just choose either (see Section 3.2.1). Such an integration between UG and EOS results in a linguistic system. This system is either *perfect Grammar* (PG) which is a property of any NS, or IL which has characteristics different (but not always) from those of the PG, and hence, a property of an NNS.

It is clear that there is some kind of abstractness in how this approach works, and so, it needs to be enhanced and concretized. Thus, to concretize the approach presented in Figure 1 above, I use the following metaphor. Nowadays, laptops come down to markets with an operating system, (let’s say Windows), and this operating system is “half-installed.” Now, the moment this laptop is bought, and the user presses the power button, the operating system (which is half-installed) starts to resume the installation process without intervening by the user (i.e. installation process continues automatically). This, to a large extent, is similar to *Principle* “instillation” in the brain but then, the laptop is not perfectly functioning, i.e. the user needs to set (manually) one language, either Arabic or English or whatever language he/she desires as the primary working language, the type of mouse, i.e. either touchpad or mouse, wired or wireless mouse, battery or electric charger, let alone adding programs such as dictionaries, antivirus, MSOffice, PDF and so on to make the laptop function properly and perfectly. Now, the laptop with a half-installed-operating system can be called the *Initial State* which resembles the initial state every child is born with (i.e. UG principles and parameters instilled in his/her brain). The installation process is activated once a user presses the power button. Thus, pressing the power button is exactly what EOS does to the principles of UG in the child’s brain. Setting a language, a mouse and/or a charging method by the user is exactly similar to what EOS does to UG *language-specific properties*, i.e. parameters, and hence, reaching the *final state*, i.e. working properly and perfectly in the case of laptop, or the linguistic system in the case of LA. Note that for the laptop to work *properly*, it needs a



proficient user, i.e. one who knows how to deal with laptops. By the same token, for LA to result in PG, the EOS has to be perfect, i.e. providing the child with everything needed and necessary for LA to take place properly, perfectly and optimally.

Now, if, for instance, the installation process happens to be performed by someone who is not proficient in using the laptops, i.e. someone who could not fix programs, such a process will not reach the working-properly-final state, i.e. the computer will work but improperly. Let's resemble the proficient user to the perfect EOS (provided by AE, RE or even FE) and the resultant linguistic system to the Native Speaker of *Language*, let's call it **L**, and the improficient one to the imperfect EOS (provided by FE, RE or even AE), and the resultant linguistic system to L2 learner's *Interlanguage*. If this is true, it follows that what really matters is how perfect the EOS provided to a learner is. In other words, the creation of either **L** or **IL** depends heavily on how perfect EOS is, be it in AE, RE or even FE. Now, recall that AE brings about PG (**L**), but this is not always true, and it is not always true that RE and FE result in imperfect **L** (i.e. **IL**), I return to this issue below.

As stated above, the EOS can be AE (i.e. parents, caretakers, etc.) in the case of L1, or RE in the case of L2 learners in L1 setting, or FE, which in this case is the classroom. In the case of the latter, however, the EOS, either in the form of RE or FE, "reactivates" the UG universal properties, i.e. *principles*, and "reactivates" and "retriggers" the UG language-specific properties, i.e. *parameters*. Notice that in AE, EOS "activates" the UG principles but activates and triggers the parameters. However, in the case of L2 acquisition, in RE and/or FE, EOS "reactivates" both principles and parameters and retriggers the latter. The reason for this is that, in the former, the learner's FL is a "Black Box," i.e. there is no linguistic system in it. In the latter, however, there exists a linguistic system, i.e. the learner's L1 linguistic system. However, the RE highly differs from classroom in that it provides the learner with a natural linguistic input, though slightly different from that in AE, where he/she "experiences" real linguistic input, i.e. such linguistic input is not modeled but natural, and, in this, I completely agree with (Saville-Troike, 2006; Ellis, 1997, among others).

The approach presented in Figure 1 implies that EOS, in the case of RE, provides an L2 learner with whatever AE provides L1 learner, though not exactly in terms of nonlinguistic factors. This actually cannot be equally provided to L2 learners in FE for several reasons. Now, in both cases, i.e. RE and FE, the question is why is the linguistic system called IL? A plausible answer to this question comes from the fact that it is implausible to equal what EOS provides L1 learners (usually children) to that provided to L2 ones (especially adults). In addition, such a resultant linguistic system is called IL simply because SLA here could be (have been) influenced by several factors, linguistic and/or nonlinguistic. Linguistic factors include (but not limited to) the linguistic input presented to L2 learners (quantitatively and/or qualitatively), input modeling, and the way it is presented, (i.e. the method(s) followed in presenting it). The nonlinguistic factors, however, include age (cf. Birdsong, 1992, 1999; Bongaerts, 1999; Shormani, 2012, 2013a, among many others), motivation (cf. Han, 2004, in the case of professor Wu, I return to this point below), attitudes towards L2 and its speakers, classroom facilities, teachers, fossilization (see White, 2003; Long, 2003; Shormani, 2012, 2013a, to appear; Han, 2004; Krashen, 1981, 1982, among many others). All these factors either linguistic or nonlinguistic make the resultant linguistic system "imperfect." *Imperfect* in the sense that it could not be equalized to L1 learners' linguistic system hence, **IL**, and hence, the answer to the above question.

## 6. Mentalo-behaviorism in LA Theory Spectrum

The proposed approach differs from other previous works in the field in that it states it clearly that the resultant linguistic system is "perfect" because all native speakers of **L**, have perfect grammar of **L** comprising both I-language and E-language. In this, there is some kind of integration between Chomsky's initial state and the expected final state, rather than merely competence and performance (see Saville-Troike, 2006). *Initial State* could be understood as the UG a child is born with, it is also what could be understood by Chomsky's I-language. It is the very state FL seems to look like when a child is born. In fact, the main goal of linguistic theory is to describe how FL (in its initial state) operates when first exposed to EOS linguistic



input (cf. Chomsky, 1986, 2000, 2004) and how it accounts for LA in its spheres. Thus, PG is the knowledge every adult human possesses where the “final state” may not exactly mirror the “initial state.” A very important feature of the approach presented in Figure 1 is that it gives an equal role to both innate properties and environmental ones to play in the LA process, either L1 or L2, which is one of the novel characteristics of the proposal. However, the most important characteristic is that it accounts for both L1 and L2 acquisition and not merely confined to either of them as used to be held in other approaches or models to LA. In other words, the theory proposed here does not differentiate between acquisition and learning as held in previous work (e.g. Krashen, 1981, 1982). This is due to the fact that since UG properties are “instilled” in every human brain, in the case of L1 acquisition, the child is not in need for *explicit* learning of such properties especially principles, what the EOS does is just activate and trigger them. Thus, this limits the load of learnability placed on the child and reduces the complexity of the acquisition process. In fact, this has been a trend in minimalism (see, for instance, Chomsky, 1993, 1995; Radford, 1997), and more of this has been emphasized in recent minimalist developments (see Chomsky, 1999, 2000, 2004, 2005, 2008, 2013).

To me, there is only very less difference, if any at all, between L1 and L2 acquisition due to the fact that, in principle, both processes result in a linguistic system irrespective of what this linguistic system is all about. However, the crucial difference lies in peripheral aspects such as the factors involved in both processes, be they linguistic or nonlinguistic. For instance, Professor Wu stays fifty one years in the US having an RE to English but her Chinese-English accent does not change due to some reason, be it fossilization, motivation or whatever it is but not something related to mental, psychic and/or genetic capability for she is a professor of physics (Han, 2004). Genie has been subjected to excessive learning programs but she hardly learns syntax (Curtiss, 1977). However, there are numerous examples of NNSs who speak English, be it American or British, the way NSs do and the plausible reason is that they do not fossilize (see Shormani, 2013a; White, 2003; Han, 2004). Contrary to this, there are numerous examples of those NSs who have imperfect systems of their languages either productive or receptive and Dyslexia and Aphasia are just two examples. Language is a perfect system, complete in itself. It is that distinctive property gifted to all humans and humans alone, and hence, distinguishing them from all creatures.

Thus, as has been stated above, the mentalo-behaviorist theory, I am proposing here attributes an equalized portion to mental capacities like that to ritualized linguistic input, where each’s portion, in addition to how it is different from both approaches (i.e. mentalism and behaviorism), is borne out. However, the reader-researcher might have a question roaming in his/her mind as to what is new in this approach and how it differs from social-based LA theories like *interactionism* (in fact, a similar question has been raised by one of the *JTTE*’s anonymous reviewers, and the following answer has been advocated by him/her). In fact, the proposed approach differs from interactionism in three major aspects. First, while the *mentalo-behaviorist approach* focuses on both innate and cognitive abilities humans have as an in-built UG (i.e. principles and parameters governing phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, etc.), on the one hand, and environment-based factors like linguistic input, motivation, etc. on the other hand, interactionism (a social-constructivist approach best attributed to *Jerome Bruner*, following the work of the Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky, the founder of *Socio-cultural Development Theory*), focuses on semiotics, more precisely, pragmatics *per se*, which is manifested in the child’s speech directed by the caretaker’s baby’s talk. Second, the present approach gives equal importance to both L1 and L2 acquisition, maintaining no difference between L1 and L2 acquisition, and if there were a difference, it would not be in acquisition as a process but only in how learners are exposed to the linguistic input. Interactionism, though valuable, could be said to be a behaviorist-oriented approach. In other words, it places much emphasis on the learner’s behaviors by focusing on the “context and how learners use their environment (in particular, conversational interactions) to build their knowledge of the second language” (Gass, 2002, p. 170), which seems, to me, to be the same as those maintained by behaviorism. In fact, interactionism gives very little portion to innate, genetic, cognitive and tacit mental abilities every human is born with, and so like behaviorism, it exaggerates the role of environment. It is true that adults play an important role in acquiring language but not to the extent exaggerated by interactionism (Shormani, 2012), and if this applies to L1 (via motherese), it does not apply



to L2, however. Moreover, being a social-constructivist approach, interactionism pays much more attention to the early caretaker-infant conversations in LA. Third, and most importantly, while the approach I am proposing could be utilized in L1 and L2 acquisition settings, because it gives enough space to L2 process, it is difficult, however, to maintain the same interactionist status in L2 learning settings. In other words, a teacher, specifically a foreign one, could by no means play the role of caretaker. To me, a stable and well-furnished language learning output is a result of a twofold task: first, knowing language, and second, knowing about language. The former necessitates learning theoretical perspectives of L2 in the form of studying the major modules, viz. phonology, morphology, syntax and semantics, and hence, building a linguistic knowledge-base, (a strong native or native-like competence), which, in other words, constitutes the basis for the latter (pragmatics and/or performance), i.e. how to use the knowledge acquired in using the language in real life situations which, then, comes as a result of learning other skills like speaking, listening, reading, etc. This, in fact, could be obtained if the theory I am proposing here is best utilized in and out classroom. Thus, if *interactionism* may have an obvious role in L1 acquisition, it seems that this role (if any at all) in that of L2 is hazy still, casting doubts on its reliability as an approach to LA.

### **7. Conclusions and Pedagogical Implications**

Thus, probably no other issue has aroused hot debate and controversy as LA, and hence, there has been no consensus among linguists and researchers as to how, when and where LA process takes place. Nor have they agreed on the theories, methods and/or models that try to account for such a phenomenon. Some say that L2 is acquired in the same way as L1 while others see the two processes differently distinguishing between them holding that while L1 is acquired, L2 is learned. Two of the most influential and controversial theories, namely, behaviorism and mentalism have been thoroughly discussed in this article. Thus, I have proposed a mentalo-behaviorist approach to LA, be it L1 or L2. It is an integrated approach incorporating mental and behavioral properties, where an equal portion has been attributed to each. That is, UG plays an equal role in LA like that played by EOS, for the fact that each alone does not lead to LA process, and hence, cannot account for it adequately. It is also assumed that there is no difference between L1 and L2 acquisition since both of them result in a linguistic system, irrespective of the fact that the linguistic system resulted from each is different in many aspects which are ascribed to linguistic and nonlinguistic factors and thus, the former is called a perfect grammar and the latter interlanguage.

In the context of L1 acquisition, for instance, and according to the approach proposed, both mental abilities, i.e. UG properties and the linguistic input provided to children via EOS, and because the setting of L1 in this case is AE (and in the case of normal children), there will be some kind of integration between the former and the latter for LA process to take place. EOS will function through the people, viz. parents, caretakers, etc. who speak the language around the child. The EOS will activate the UG principles (universally invariant) because they are “instilled” in every normal child’s brain, but UG parameters (those properties specific to the language to be learned) will be triggered by the EOS. In the latter case, the child has to choose either of two choices, and here he/she has to learn, i.e. the EOS will provide him/her with the choice peculiar to his/her first language.

The Genie’s case leads us indirectly to assume that the more the parents talk to their children, the more they learn and improve their language. This also in turn emphasizes the need of encouraging children to speak even if nobody understands them. A child’s talk depends on the people he/she lives with. So, a child who lives with a family having articulation disorder or speech delay will be affected by these problems in his/her speech. He/she will suffer from these problems even if he/she has no hearing impairment or organic problems (Newbury & Monaco, 2010). It is also widely held that parents’ constant criticism of their child’s talk (i.e. say this, no, say that, etc.) at a particular stage, i.e. when the child is not matured enough, for instance, for the sake of fluency, may affect the child’s mental properties and result in undesirable language output. If this actually happens, i.e. if the child is always criticized, he/she might formulate bad attitudes towards learning the language, thinking that speaking, and hence, language as a whole is difficult to learn which, consequently, may lead to abandoning learning altogether. If, for instance, the child suffers from



dysarthria or apraxia, he/she might avoid anyone, resulting in delaying the acquisition process. While the former causes problems in executing the movements of speech sounds with the medium, the latter affects the ability to plan appropriate and consequent movements for the production of speech sounds. It is also advised not to use signs, like moving hands or exaggerating facial movements when trying to orient children to speak. However, there is accumulating evidence of the cruciality of speaking to children in using motherese (child's talk), etc. because it encourages them to speak, learn and reach the state of PG (see e.g. Masataka, 1998; Ferguson, 1964).

As far as L2 setting is concerned, the approach states that there are two setting, viz. RE in the case of L2 learners in an L1 context or FE, which in this case is the classroom in a foreign context. The approach has its own implications for each setting. As far as the former is concerned, the EOS will activate the UG principles of the L2 in the case of children by providing them with the linguistic input which is authentic (authentic in the sense that the source of such input is real exposure to the L2's speakers). This could be achieved through the child's peers at and/or outside schools (see e.g. Cummins, 2000). In the case of adults, the EOS will "reactivate" such principles. Notice here we say "reactivate" because such principles have been "activated" when the learner acquires his/her L1. In other words, what the EOS does is just provides the learner with the linguistic input required for *reactivating* the UG principles. As for parameters, in both cases, what EOS does is provide the learner with authentic linguistic input to reactivate some other parameters (triggered for the learners' L1) and retrigger them into the learner's IL providing him/her with such input to be able to internalize the L2 linguistic system, and hence, choose the appropriate setting of a particular parameter. Examples of exploiting such EOS oriented programs are best found in *Immersion Programs* (see e.g. Michele, 2002; Genesee, 1987; Johnson & Swain, 1997).

Regarding the FE, the setting is the classroom, and here, the learner is either child or adult. In both cases, the linguistic input is not authentic (the source of which is often nonnative teachers). The learner and learning process is confined to classroom with a time extending maximally between 30 to 90 minutes (at school to university, respectively). Now, according to our approach, the EOS is the teacher (being the orientor) and what he/she provides the learner with, i.e. the linguistic input of the L2 being learned. The success of LA process depends on several factors including (but not limited to) the method(s) of teaching, the knowledge (the competence in L2 linguistic system, be it in phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, etc.) of L2 the teacher possesses, the motivation, interest and love of the learner to L2, his/her attitudes towards the L2 native speakers, the text, the nonlinguistic setting (like the state of the classroom, the number of learners in the classroom, the electronic facilities) and so on.

Now, to compensate for the loss of the advantages of real exposure that provides the learner with authentic-like linguistic input, I suggest that teachers should be trained to perform what is expected from them. In other words, they have to have strong knowledge in knowledge-base courses like phonology (specifically pronunciation), syntax, etc. and before everything else, they should be interested in what they are doing. A teacher should be a creative actor. Learners have to be motivated by creating competitions, presentations and activities. More importantly, communicative teaching should be emphasized. Real-like learning settings should be created where learners feel they are exposed to authentic L2 input in real life situations. Extensive video sessions and language labs should be made use of, where learners are exposed to authentic L2 input (see also Shormani, to appear, for collocability stable acquisition UG-Based Model). However, needless to say that this very version of the proposed theory needs to be revisited and rethought, and I leave this for future studies.

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