Second Language Learning Through Exolingual And Ergonomic Approaches (A Re-Examination of Language Evolution in Bilingual Societies)

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Abstract: This article explores the process of second language acquisition in bilingual societies through exolingual and ergonomic approaches. It argues that language learning is not merely a cognitive or structural process, but one shaped by socio-cultural, psychological, and environmental factors. Drawing on theoretical perspectives from Lupyan, Krashen, Skinner, and others, the article re-examines language evolution through cultural transmission and practical engagement. The exolingual method, introduced by André Martinet, emphasizes learning within real-life communicative and cultural contexts, while ergonomic principles highlight the importance of designing comfortable, learner-friendly environments. Together, these approaches offer a comprehensive and effective framework for enhancing foreign language acquisition in diverse educational settings.

Introduction: The social status of language evolves like other aspects of society. For this reason, adults often take on the initiative to learning a second foreign language. This phenomenon arises due to changes in the socio-political principles of states. Learning an additional language requires a specialized approach. However, distinguishing languages from one another and avoiding confusion between their formally similar but semantically different elements necessitates a socio-cultural approach to the process.

According to Lupyan, language is one of human cognitive abilities. Relying on cognitive abilities in the development of foreign language learning methods enhances educational effectiveness. One of the key features of language is its structure, which can be defined through two primary characteristics— combinatoriality and compositionality. Combinatoriality refers to the ability to combine small units (sounds or gestures) into meaningful units (morphemes), while compositionality refers to the ability to combine these small units into larger words (sentences) whose meanings derive from their combined meaning. These two powerful features enable speakers to generate an almost infinite number of words from a limited set of units. Nevertheless, how linguistic structures emerge remains a complex question. One long-standing innatist perspective suggests that linguistic structure arose due to Homo sapiens' genetic connection to language. Conversely, the usage-based perspective holds that linguistic structure results from general-purpose cognitive tendencies related to learning and memory, such as working memory constraints. These individual tendencies are reinforced at the group level through cycles of learning and usage across generations of speakers, a process known as cultural transmission. This perspective is supported by several studies utilizing the repeated learning paradigm, which shows that cultural transmission optimizes language for

transmission—making it more learnable and structured.

The repeated learning paradigm is a method used to study the transmission of cultural knowledge, making it an ideal tool for experimentally investigating the evolution of language and the emergence of structure. While studies using the repeated learning paradigm contribute to our understanding of language evolution, they rely on several simplifying assumptions. If language learning is considered the combined product of prior knowledge, experiences, and environmental influences, foreign language learning schemes can be easily explained.

Thus, foreign language learning effectiveness can be enhanced through cultural transmission and accumulated experience. The method of studying languages based on their social, cultural, and psychological contexts is known as the exolingual approach. The exolingual method, introduced into linguistics by André Martinet, suggests that language should not be analyzed solely based on its internal structure (phonetics, morphology, syntax) but also within the context of external factors—history, society, and communication conditions. The exolingual method is an approach that considers not only the grammatical structure of a language but also its usage, cultural significance, and social importance.

Exolingual methods in foreign language learning involve various techniques and strategies used to acquire a foreign language. These methods focus on studying the structure, grammar, vocabulary, and phonetics of a language, helping learners achieve specific goals. Exolingual methods can be categorized into two main approaches:

1.   Intuitive methods (Natural or Communicative methods): These methods are based on natural communication between people. The primary focus is on speaking and comprehension, while writing and reading receive less attention. For example, learning a language by immersing oneself in a foreign environment or through cultural exposure and engagement.

2.   Didactic or Educational methods (Methodology, Pedagogy): These methods employ specific techniques for teaching and learning. For instance, methods focused on grammatical foundations, vocabulary, phonetics, and syntax. These approaches help learners develop all aspects of language (writing, reading, speaking, and listening) simultaneously.

Thus, exolingual methods provide effective approaches to language acquisition, integrating supplementary materials (texts, audio, videos, etc.) for knowledge and skill development. Several linguistic scholars have conducted research on exolingual methods and their effectiveness in foreign language learning.

Stephen Krashen, famous for his "Natural Learning" hypothesis, emphasizes communicative methods in language learning. His works highlight that practical methods based on natural conversation are more effective than rote grammar learning. Krashen's key theories include:

●   **Input Hypothesis**: Learners should be exposed to language that is slightly beyond their current level but still comprehensible.

●   **Affective Filter Hypothesis**: Language learning is more effective when learners have a positive psychological and emotional state.

B.F. Skinner, through his behaviorist theory, viewed language learning as a process shaped by communication and reinforcement. He believed in a reward-based approach to language learning rather than natural acquisition.

James Paul Gee analyzed language learning through "Discourse Analysis" and "Socialization" theories, emphasizing the importance of social and cultural contexts in language acquisition. Similarly, John Seely Brown focused on practical problem-solving in language learning through social contexts and empirical research.

Kenneth P. O'Brien explored psycholinguistic mechanisms in language acquisition, such as meaning and context-based approaches. These theories help establish the scientific foundation for exolingual methods, which prioritize social interactions and communication over internal linguistic structures.

Exolingual methods, which incorporate natural and practical techniques in language acquisition, can be highly effective, but their success depends on multiple factors:

1.   Natural environment and communication opportunities: Since these methods are communication-based, they are more effective when learners have opportunities to use the language in different environments, such as living or working in a foreign-language-speaking region.

2.   Motivation and psychological state: A strong motivation and positive psychological attitude significantly enhance language acquisition. Conversely, stress and emotional barriers can hinder progress.

3.   Individual learning styles: Exolingual methods should align with learners' individual preferences. Some may benefit more from visual materials or critical analysis, while others learn better through natural conversation and audiovisual content.

4. Personalized education and context: The effectiveness of language learning depends on integrating grammar and vocabulary with cultural and social aspects.

5. Language proficiency and learners' background: These methods are particularly effective for beginners who rely on basic vocabulary and phrases, but they may be less beneficial for advanced learners.

6. Learning objectives: If the goal is to acquire specific linguistic skills (e.g., writing or grammar), other structured approaches may be more suitable. However, if the aim is to use the language in social and professional settings, exolingual methods are highly effective.

Exolingual methods yield significant results when applied in the right context and under suitable conditions. Their main advantage is facilitating natural language use, making foreign language acquisition faster and easier. However, their effectiveness depends on individual circumstances, requiring appropriate programs and supportive materials.

In exolingual methods, learners are given opportunities to study language in a familiar, natural, and practical environment. Similarly, ergonomic principles emphasize that a workspace should be comfortable and conducive to human needs. These two principles are interconnected, as an individual's psychological state and working conditions impact their productivity.

While ergonomic methods focus on organizing work environments and materials, exolingual methods emphasize structuring the language-learning environment (e.g., communication). If the language-learning environment is comfortable and engaging, the learning process becomes more effective. In an ergonomically designed system, all necessary resources (audiovisual materials, grammatical and lexical information) should be optimally arranged to enhance language acquisition.

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