

## THEORIES OF LEARNING AN L2. A PARADIGM SHIFT?

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### *Introduction*

This paper investigates some important issues in theoretical reflection on second language learning by tracing a complex network of assumptions and convictions in the existing frameworks to gain a better understanding of their applicative potential. The multitude of issues has been limited to the following essentials: 1) some axioms concerning the nature of language and its acquisition, 2) the status of the field investigating non-primary language acquisition, 3) sources of the theory of language acquisition, and 4) the architecture of language learning models. Finally, the question is raised whether the field can be regarded as being in a state of transition between paradigms, understood as accepted research matrices (Kuhn 1962), or is it, in fact, a case of the discipline's advancement from a pre-paradigmatic to a paradigmatic state. The purpose of these considerations is to gain a better insight into what seem to be the alternatives in the development of second language research (SLAR) and its prospects for the attainment of applicative success.

The field seems to be at a fascinating developmental stage when questions are asked about its identity and status. Solutions offered in these central matters may have far-reaching consequences for future developments of the young and vigorously expanding discipline. It is recognized that non-primary language acquisition has a specificity of its own which makes it an independent area of investigation rather than a sub-field of a larger discipline, e.g., linguistics, but the subject matter under investigation is continually found to be too complex and multi-aspectual to lend itself to uniform, let alone widely accepted, representations or models. It is not necessarily the case that the subject matter evades conceptualizations but that there seems to be almost an infinite number of modeling possibilities, each of them offering fertile grounds to researchers. Recent proliferation of theorizing in the field of SLAR (Beretta 1991; Bialystok 1990; Crookes 1992; Gregg 1989; Hatch, Shirai, and Fantuzzi 1990; Klein 1989; Long 1985, 1990; McLaughlin 1987, 1990; Schumann 1990; Sokolik 1990; Spolsky 1990; Tomlin and Villa 1994) suggests that theory construction and theoretical reflection are becoming mainstream scholarly activities.

### 1. *Some axioms concerning the nature of language and its acquisition*

Three possibilities of conceptualizing language are outlined by Hatch (1983). For one thing, language can be assumed to exist independently of cognitive and social knowledge. From this point of view, the social and cognitive factors are irrelevant to the study of language acquisition. Causality is confined to the internal linguistic system. One can ask questions about units of analysis, the sequence in which particular linguistic units are acquired, or the difficulty of syntactic structures. The learners acquire a new structure because the system allows for the acquisition of a new form. To make it distinct from psychological reductionism, this position can be referred to as linguistic reductionism, although Hatch calls it simply 'reductionist'. Scholars of the linguistic reductionist orientation, e.g., Felix (1981), Flynn (1985), Gregg (1989) subscribe to the Chomskyan tradition with its emphasis on the powerful innate component. Gregg's view is that the core of the theory of second language acquisition is the linguistic competence of second language learners. Linguistic theory regards it as autonomous and modular. It is autonomous in the sense of a separate mental system. Its primitive terms are not artifacts of a system which encompasses both human language and other human abilities.

The interactionist conception assumes that language, cognitive knowledge, and social interaction are interrelated in a unidimensional way. Language is seen as derived from, or strongly influenced by, cognitive and social factors. The three components are seen as discrete, but there are cognitive prerequisites for the acquisition of some parts of the language system. Socialization is needed for language growth. Research in this tradition ascribes some role to such factors as input, interaction, negotiation of meaning, or language functions (Chaudron 1985; Sampson 1982; Larsen-Freeman and Long 1991).

The unified models treat language as a property which cannot be abstracted from the human being. Individuals have a highly integrated system of social, cognitive, and language knowledge that is basic, but may become specialized and differentiated with age (Norman 1987). Individual differences are recognized, but they remain within the limits of what is humanly possible. Unified models are more complex conceptually than the remaining ones. The context of defining language is verbal communication rather than autonomous syntax. 'Language learning' is a singular concept which cannot be characterized by a sum of a theory of language and a theory of learning. The concept is treated as an instance of learning which is possible only in humans and which possesses a specificity of its own.

Direct consequence of this view is the selection of anthropocentric models to represent language acquisition. According to de Beaugrande (1987), an anthropocentric model is a specific sub-category of constructs representing human cognitive functioning as species specific information processing which, unlike Artificial Intelligence or computer models, assume that the defining properties of the processing systems include consciousness, volition, and adaptive behavior employing plans. Language is treated as a specialization of human cognitive faculties of its own kind, whereas its use is regarded as goal-oriented behavior.

The role of the environment is not controversial. In fact, the whole issue is preempted by defining the learner as an open system equipped for, and dependent on, the interaction with the environment. Information exchange characterizing language use is one of the forms of environmental transactions conducted by human beings. According to Neisser (1968, 1976), a non-trivial cognitive theory has something to say about what people do in real, culturally significant situations. The account of human interaction with the world constitutes its ecological validity.

### 2. *The status of the field investigating non-primary language acquisition*

After two decades of intensive research activity in the field, scholars wonder about the prospects for SLAR to become a science. They look at the ideals of scholarly merit it should match, or standards of rigor it should pursue. The two central issues at the moment seem to be a) how to discover the lawfulness of the process, and b) how to develop a theory to capture a minimum number of factors which determine the observable facts.

Doing SLA research, such as data finding, by itself is no guarantee of developing a reasonable theory of SLA capable of meeting general scientific criteria. To many scholars it is clear that the field is yet to see a major breakthrough in theory development; others are concerned about the paucity of the existing body of theory. In 1984, Lightbown evaluated the state of the field as atheoretical and preparadigmatic, and pointed out several methodological weaknesses in the accepted research strategy. Scholars continue to explore the topic of theory construction and ask the question: can SLAR be a science in the same sense of the term as used with reference to the natural sciences (McLaughlin 1987; Ochsner 1979; Schumann 1984).

The initial assumptions regarding language outline different paths of developing the discipline and, by the same token, imply its different status. The reductionist and interactionist models are sufficiently similar in this respect to be subsumed under one category and juxtaposed with the unified model. In the first conception, the unit of investigation, the data-based study, guarantees the empirical character of the discipline whose status is essentially interdisciplinary (Long 1985, 1990; Crookes 1988, 1992). This means that the research is informed by different tributary disciplines which are authoritative in the matters of language, learning, the social dimension, etc. However, it cannot be ignored that this interdisciplinary commitment is in conflict with the empirical concerns of the discipline: the implicit model of the field's research object is not a representation of an empirical system but a hybrid constellation of factors quite distant from the empirical phenomenon, since it incorporates a mediating level composed of segments of systems investigated by the tributary fields. Each discipline inevitably represents its domain through the process of idealization (Nowak 1977). However, the interdisciplinary object incorporates its two stages. Can it, therefore, be considered an empirical system in the technical sense, i.e., representing phenomena in space and time and capable of accommodating feedback from empirical investigations?

In fact, SLAR procedures involve some concretization of the initially abstract understanding of language by reinstating more specific factors or distinctions. This

process, however, is not systematically related to an empirical map, but is largely stimulated by the local problems with data in the individual data-based studies, e.g., linguistic rules versus comprehension, knowledge and control (Bialystok and Sharwood Smith 1985), input for acquisition and input for learning (Faerch and Kasper 1986). This concretization *ex post* allows some cognitive admixtures to be inserted into the initially (linguistic) reductionist view of language but, at the same time, it creates a divergent problem space without systematic connection with the real phenomenon.

The view that SLAR is an interdisciplinary endeavor provides little guidance in the field's search for its own identity. Most disciplines, especially in the area of the humanities, are interdisciplinary. The route which seems appropriate in the unified framework is different. It takes into account the circumstance that scientific disciplines justify their existence by identifying a unique research object, i.e., an object not covered in its entirety by any other field, and defined according to its internal priorities (Grucza 1983). Only this property can support legitimate claims to autonomy. According to this statement, SLAR which seeks to be a science should identify itself as primarily autonomous, and only secondarily interdisciplinary. The distinction is by no means trivial. If the field is treated as primarily interdisciplinary, it opens up possibilities of representing its research object according to the priorities of the tributary disciplines which change in time and do not take into account the bias of the recipient field. Integration of these tributary views is not based on some predictable program, which leaves ample room to subjective solutions, not always acceptable to other scholars of the same orientation (for examples, see Dakowska 1987). In brief, such a conception lacks focus, not to mention problems with the accumulation of knowledge and replication of data-based studies.

An autonomous field, on the other hand, is expected to be targeted to its specific subject matter. But even then, a fundamental question still remains: is it to envisage itself as a formal or an empirical discipline? Field-specific priorities cannot be properly identified without a prior commitment to one of these options, because each implies a diverging route with quite different constraints on the subject matter of the discipline and its research procedures. Formal disciplines deal with ideal concepts and are evaluated on the basis of parsimony and internal consistency of their statements with axioms (Reschner 1982), whereas the empirical ones investigate systems anchored in space and time and test hypotheses externally, i.e., by means of empirical methods. Language sciences can conceivably be developed as formal as well as empirical fields, while language and language learning can be represented by a multitude of models at different levels of generality. This is the reason why reflection on the desirable format of the discipline is economical: it helps to discern the incompatible options and, in the long run, perhaps even untestable constructs.

The decision in favor of the empirical format reduces at least some of the uncertainty connected with defining such a complex phenomenon as language learning. It provides guidance in the form of spatiotemporal constraints on the generality and scope of the definition (Grucza 1983; Nowak 1977; Wójcicki 1982). Both formal and empirical disciplines represent their objects by model structures,

but the empirical ones model real phenomena and must therefore be accountable on the basis of their consistency with data derived from empirical reality. The validity of a theory in an empirical field is found out externally. The relationship between observational sentences and theoretical sentences is such that the empirical evidence is relevant to the form and content of the theoretical level. A theory must be related to observational data by correspondence rules, so that evidential support can be identified. A theory may be confirmed or disconfirmed on the basis of empirical evidence. Reschner (1982:229) points out that empirical sciences must have a theory-external quality control "vital to avoid spinning around in reality-detached cycles of purely theoretical gyrations".

The spatiotemporal constraints of the subject matter, therefore, seem to be deeply significant if the empirical discipline is expected to achieve a modicum of success, be it understood as its predictive success or the successful use of knowledge to manipulate real phenomena (Pitt 1988). The predictive success is conditioned by the explanatory success, since predictions are derived from explanations, and causal relationships expressed in explanations refer to events in space and time. The possibility of manipulating real phenomena is contingent on the availability of knowledge. Pitt (1988:7) comments that "Whatever knowledge may be, its hallmark is the ability to do something with it." This quality is not a by-product of a concretization strategy operating on a formal or hybrid model, but a deliberate effect of research conducted within the format of an empirical discipline.

The subsequent step at which the empirical constraints are relevant is testing hypothesis generated in the field and identifying the evidence to support or refute them. If there is attempted isomorphism between the empirical reality and the subject matter investigated by the field, this evidence can be located. The approximation of isomorphism in this case is synonymous with modeling the subject matter as an empirical system. In such a case it is feasible to tie hypotheses to evidence (Reschner 1982) which cannot be done with an untestable hypothesis.

The selection of the empirical format of the discipline of SLA tallies with the choice of anthropocentric models to represent language learning phenomena. Language processes are inseparable from the human subject: they take place with the participation of the human information processing equipment. Language use, which is an episodic entity, is the basis of the synchronic as well as diachronic view of language learning. What makes this view a genuinely empirical one is the fact that it incorporates the attentional limitations of the human processing resources (Keele 1973). The diachronic view of language learning can be identified through description, but not predicted or constructed on the basis of the synchronic view. It is not congruent with the framework to represent it primarily as a sequence of syntactical forms.

### 3. Sources of the theory of language acquisition

There seem to be two options in the quest of theory. One is to look for the right theory as if it already existed, the other is to develop it from scratch. A

connection is noticeable between the reductionist and interactionist conceptions of language, the interdisciplinary status assigned to the field of second language acquisition, and the position that the theory of the field can be found rather than developed according to standard scientific procedures. There is consistency in this way of thinking since we cannot assume to have a theory of something that has not yet been identified as an object of theorizing. If, on the other hand, it is assumed that the research domain has been successfully identified by the tributary disciplines, the only problem that remains is to search the existing pool of theories to find one that optimally satisfies selected criteria of merit.

Several researchers address this issue applying fairly sophisticated conceptual systems, while depreciating the most fundamental concern for the field's empirical character inseparable from its right to autonomy. Crookes (1992) analyzes different theory formats to find criteria which make a theory adequately explanatory. In other words, in order to upgrade SLA theory, he employs external standards of scholarly merit. The point which is ignored is that these external criteria can be applied successfully to a given body of propositions in addition to, not instead of, the identification of the discipline's subject matter. The steps he has in mind are logically subsequent to identifying the empirical system to be described, verified, explained, etc. The author acknowledges that theories use models to illustrate their own interpretations, but this is different from the postulation that disciplines construct models to represent the complex phenomena they investigate.

Beretta (1991) evaluates the possibilities of theory construction and asks the question how to distinguish science from non-science and nonsense. The problem of the plurality of SLA theories can be resolved by way of complementation. He rightly points out that a theory must be evaluated in the light of evidence, but he does not seem to realize that, to pass this test, it must be an empirical theory. An empirical theory refers to an empirical system, that is, a construct consisting of concepts which refer to spatiotemporal phenomena. If a theory is about a formal system, it is impervious to evidence. The same reservation must be applied to hybrid representations emanating from the interdisciplinary conception.

Although Gregg (1989) suggests that, first of all, the domain of enquiry should be identified, he defines it as the linguistic theory of what we think is acquired. Points T1, T2, T3, to be described are not temporal but refer to states of grammars. A theory conceived in this way has a formal rather than empirical status and would have to be transformed to be of use in exploring empirical laws of second language acquisition. Following the idea expressed by Reschner (1982), if the subject matter is defined as a fairly abstract entity, referential connections between the concepts and the evidence from the empirical reality are severed. What remains is the option of pursuing the field as a formal discipline, which is what Gregg brilliantly does. But in such a case, empirical evidence is irrelevant as well as unavailable since it is impossible to verify empirically a formal model which is programmatically abstracted from space and time.

According to Long (1990), the goal of the theory is to postulate mechanism(s) in SLA and to account for change, i.e., to answer the questions of 'how' and 'why' of language acquisition. In order to develop a theory of the interdisciplinary

field of SLA, one needs to synthesize the well-attested empirical findings about the process and the product of interlanguage development regarding the learners, environments, and interlanguages. He does not take into account the fact that such an essentially inductive summation of findings can only be developed if there exists a prior theoretical network to render them meaningful (Tyler 1948; Henry 1966).

The fundamental question posed by Klein (1989) regards the nature of the innate language learning capacity: is it a grammar specific component or the application of general cognitive capacities to the particular field of language. A theory which does not postulate such a module would be more parsimonious from the one that does, but Klein admits that we may be forced to make such a commitment by empirical findings. His suggestion, however, may seem to be unrealistic because it is doubtful if empirical hypotheses can be formulated to support or refute this deeply embedded axiom of a very abstract nature. It is hard to imagine the kind of empirical indicators adequate for this purpose. Instead, it should be acknowledged that the nature of the learner's endowment is variably interpreted depending on the tradition in which research is done, and that the whole debate can be settled rationally rather than by means of empirical testing.

The other option in a search of theory is the classical route to theory construction. It is based on the assumption that theory is an integral part of any scientific discipline, and it specializes in tasks which cannot be performed by other levels of the field. Before it can be developed, however, the discipline must select its properties among the incompatible options: the autonomous and the interdisciplinary on the one hand, and the formal and the empirical on the other. Intermediate possibilities do not seem to be promising.

Targeting the level of specificity appropriate for an autonomous empirical discipline does not by itself guarantee that the field of second language acquisition can match the criteria of scientific rigor developed in the natural sciences. Kaminski (1970) makes the observation that the natural sciences, such as geology, physics, or biology, differ from one another in terms of the investigated organisms. Living organisms cannot be treated in a mechanistic way. In the case of the humanities, which deal with individuals, societies, and culture, the organisms investigated display an even greater complexity. They are not only living but also equipped with reason and volition. In the humanities, facts are caused and determined by an improbably greater variety of factors than in the natural sciences. To seek laws, one must have at one's disposal a vast, mostly heterogeneous, material. It is possible to reduce this complexity for the sake of rigor but only at the expense of precision of representation and reliability of predicting human behavior. Variability in data in the humanities reflects an inherently human characteristic for which we need explanatory systems qualitatively more complex and broader in scope than in the natural sciences.

If we conceive of second language acquisition as an object of an autonomous empirical discipline, represented as a complex network of factors, we make it a part of science understood as a topicalized research agenda. According to Nowak (1977), the essence of any scientific method is idealization, i.e., abstraction, which

involves a list of factors perceived as relevant in the investigated research object. These factors are arranged as a hierarchy: some are regarded as more important than others. They form a simplified picture of the reality in which the relationships between factors are also included. Idealization is tantamount to modelling the empirical reality which contains all the factors and influences. A common sense view differs from a scientific view because it does not contain such selections and hierarchies. Everything is important in the common sense view. Empirical sciences may share one universe and differ in aspects of idealization, i.e., in the repertoire of factors. This means that the universe of two disciplines may be the same, e.g., language, but research object may be different.

Chronologically, a purely inductive way of data gathering, which characterizes a prescientific stage of development in a given discipline, is followed by a theoretical-explanatory stage which involves a construction of an idealization representing its research object. Initially, rival theories revise the list of factors until a consensus is reached. Such a model structure performs integrating and projecting functions with regard to empirical and theoretical research. A conceptualization of the object is not cognitively neutral (Wójcicki 1982). It is biased as a result of the selection of key terms. Adequacy of this idealization can be checked with reference to the empirical adequacy of inferences drawn from the model (Dubin 1969).

Structural elements of an empirical theory include the definition of its research object as a model structure, the content of the theory, i.e., the descriptive and explanatory statements, and the language which contains systems specific terminology. As has been stressed, the object of an empirical theory must incorporate the time factor. De Beaugrande (1981) defines theory as a conceptual apparatus applied to the envisioned domain of the inquiry. Theory is functional when it satisfies our need for orientation. It no longer rests on direct objective falsification but on the potential for representing elaborate processes inaccessible to non-theoretical discovery. Theories are intellectual constructs. They are not transferrable unless they concern identical objects (de Beaugrande 1987, Gruzca 1983).

This leads to the conclusion that the typical science agenda involves a division of labor, or specialization of levels, rather than postulation of one dominant research method, e.g., empirical testing. Both the rational and the empirical methods of research have a role to play in this agenda and both can lead to objective results. According to the ordering of goals by Nowak (1977), *reconstruction of factors, hierarchy of factors, reconstruction of interrelationships* are arranged at the least general level and constitute pre-theoretical goals. They are followed by *determination of laws, theory structure, and explanation of phenomena*, which make up the theoretical goals. Even though this ordering should be regarded as interactive rather than purely implicational, it illustrates the inevitable determination of the goals at higher level by the goals at lower level. Keeping this in mind, one has to remain skeptical about immediate prospects of SLAR to develop a theory consistent with such guidelines and perhaps fairly critical about those fragmentary theories in the field which by-pass these considerations and, as Schumann pointed out (1984), offer metaphors to explain second language acquisition.

It is quite likely that following the science agenda rather than idiosyncratic research routes is a more reliable program if the intention is to target on a convergent problem space for empirical research. It also seems to be a more promising path to the success of science, which depends on the consensus of scholars regarding their understanding of the object under investigation (Reschner 1982). Otherwise, a paradoxical possibility exists of exploring several qualitatively different research objects within one discipline without realistic prospects for refining knowledge about these objects.

#### 4. *The architecture of the models*

The reductionist and interactionist models of second language acquisition, as well as my contribution to unified modelling, are discussed in detail in another publication (Dakowska 1995). At this point of the discussion, it would only seem illustrative to juxtapose their distinctive properties, such as their essential components, the view regarding the learner's equipment, the role of the context, and the nature of postulated changes.

The components typically included in the reductionist models (e.g., Corder 1984; Krashen 1981, 1982; Schachter 1984) are: *input, intake, developing system, and output*. The learner is equipped with a powerful species-specific grammatical endowment, and is said to be creative in the process of learning. Knowledge representation is seen as competence consisting of rules underlying linguistic creativity. These rules are activated in performance.

Some amount of the learner's interaction with the environment is necessary to activate the innate potential. The environment provides input, or primary language data, on the basis of which the learner formulates hypotheses about the target system. Some amount of negative evidence is also needed. The unfolding of the process is determined by the developing system, rather than by the input data. Language learning is believed to be a lawful process (e.g., Klein 1986; Jordens 1993), but this lawfulness is primarily envisaged in the context of syntactical development. In essence, the learner is seen as a grammarizer focussed on identifying the target language grammar. The conversion of the input in the form of primary data into grammar is a process of abstraction, which leads to rule representations.

Language development is interpreted as the emergence of syntactical forms. The dynamics of the process is determined by the state of grammar internal to the system. The process of learning advances mainly as self-determined changes in the state of the system. Non-targetlike forms provide evidence about the state of the developing grammar. The diachronic dimension of the process is a linearization of the syntactical component of the target language system.

The interactionist accounts of second language acquisition are in line with the idea of depicting the process by integrating concepts from the relevant research areas (e.g., Gass 1988). The linguistic component of the model is complemented by some psychological and sociolinguistic terms. This approach also involves a considerable extension of the input component and the postulation of a more important role of the environment.

The input component feeds two processes: communication and learning. In addition to input, the process of comprehension is identified. It is understood as the conversion of data into grammar representation. The component of knowledge is not limited to L2 but also includes background knowledge, and the knowledge of L1. Output is the least developed entity so far, but under the theory of variability it is assumed to be based on both systematic and variable rules. The role of exposure, experience, and teaching is not rejected. They are necessary in stimulating the process, but they do not have a deterministic influence on the emergence of forms. One of the models (Sampson 1982) visualizes the process of learning as the mapping of form and function relationships, but in general the interactionist models see the progression of learning as the surfacing of forms.

In the unified models the defining property of the human being is that he or she is an open system equipped for interaction with the environment. Transactions with the environment are indispensable for biological, cognitive, and social survival. The type of interaction which is of interest to the study of cognition is information processing. The human equipment for information processing consists of perception, attention, memory, planning and monitoring. Human cognitive system has the representational and the executive components (Anderson 1975). Language acquisition and language use are instances of information processing and can be conceptualized as verbal communication. This is manifested in time and space as language comprehension and production.

The process of L2 acquisition must be modelled as a multidimensional development of sub-processes, which involve the acquisition of knowledge, including its declarative and procedural representations (Norman 1987), the restructuring of knowledge representations (McLaughlin 1990) leading to metalinguistic knowledge (Karmiloff-Smith 1986), the development of the processing component, surfacing as accuracy and fluency, and the internal differentiation, e.g., the development of domain-specific representations of language.

In contrast to the reductionist and interactionist models, interaction with the environment is the inherent property of the open system, which is otherwise unsustainable. The role of consciousness is not a controversial issue (cf. Schmidt 1990), because the anthropocentric models assume that the typical cognitive activities do not take place in a comatose state. An anthropocentric model is much more complex than the other models. A cross-sectional model of language use is composed of hierarchical systems and involves representational components (external and internal representations including verbal, preverbal, and propositional hierarchy), and the processing component involving controlled and automatic processing, the latter based on procedural representations.

By including the central processor as a decision-making node, the model makes provisions for the intentional, volitional property of human behavior which entails language use. The learner as the locus of the process makes the model dynamic. L2 learning cannot be reduced to the acquisition of a cognitive skill, although this is sometimes suggested (e.g., Crookes 1988; McLaughlin 1987). The process of L2 acquisition is claimed to have a specificity of its own, one cannot reasonably postulate mechanisms that would be different for L1 and L2 (e.g., Bley Vroman 1988).

L1 and L2 belong to the same typological problem space of verbal communication, whose development is constrained by the age factor over life-span.

### 5. Concluding remarks

An attempt has been made to investigate some important theoretical issues in SLAR using several guidelines from methodology of science, especially with reference to the status of the field and the constitution of the theory. It seems that the prospects of attaining applicative success, which is tantamount to providing practical knowledge, are contingent on the discipline's growing receptiveness to an agenda which incorporates the priorities of empirism and autonomy in the sense presented above. Practical knowledge cannot be obtained by way of simplifying or transforming some propositional system. It is a product of incipient commitments of a much more fundamental nature. In my view, the above considerations point to the unified conception as a viable, though still insufficiently developed framework capable of incorporating these priorities. This may mean that the reductionist and, even interactionist, lines of modeling second language acquisition will continue to provide testing ground to linguistic issues and remain otherwise tightly integrated with the science of linguistics without assuming the burden of solving practical problems, whereas the unified line of modeling may become more and more integrated with second and foreign language didactics, or even grow into a fully articulated paradigm.

A paradigm is accepted by a given community of scholars when there is a received model of the investigated reality, some agreed notion of fundamental entities and their interaction, as well as little disagreement over standards of scientific practice. A pre-paradigmatic state, on the other hand, is characterized by the coexistence of several incompatible and fairly fragmentary, theories, one of which may later become accepted as a major paradigm, especially if it seems better and more inclusive than its competitors (Kuhn 1962). Taking over Kuhn's ideas into the field of SLAR, one can notice that the field has already witnessed the coexistence of several incompatible, fairly fragmentary theories, such as, for example, the Pidginization Theory, the Acculturation Model, the Monitor Theory, etc. (McLaughlin 1987). It is an open question whether or not this should be treated as a symptom of the pre-paradigmatic state. However, if it is additionally taken into account that the stage of accepting a major model has not been reached, while the prevalent interdisciplinary status of the field is, in fact, quite detrimental to prospects of demarcating such a model, the openness of the question is slightly reduced.

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