



# European Journal of English Language Studies

Volume 4, Issue 1, 39 - 52.

ISSN: 2770-9752

<https://www.ejels.com/>

## Behaviorist Theory in Philippine English L2 Acquisition: Transition Point from L1 Contact

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Received: September 6, 2023 ▪ Revised: January 26, 2024 ▪ Accepted: March 26, 2024

**Abstract:** Skinner's behaviorist theory delineates how a child acquires L1; notwithstanding, what sets the present study apart from Skinner's findings can be culled-out from the research context itself. This paper validates the principles behind behaviorist theory as proposed by Skinner (1985) taking into account applied linguistics context. Careful scrutiny of data reveals that the explored theory also plays a vital role in the gradual L2 acquisition through meaningful linguistic attempts (e.g., There are persons cutting trees without replanting; His friends Marilyn and Alicia clean the classroom) and reading activities by fostering affirmative learning atmosphere to induce positive language attitude towards L2 acquisition and functionality. Negligible errors in the process of L2 acquisition are attributed to linguistic variability, interlanguage, and inflectional morphology component. This study is advantageous to EFL learners and teachers globally for it highlights some linguistic implications indispensable to interpret the learning rate, lexical range, comprehensible input (CI), and language cognition of L2 students specifically in early language education. EFL educators may be able to provide meaningful linguistic activities by considering the essential tenets of this academic piece as well as the multiculturalism factor to L2 acquisition.

**Keywords:** *Applied linguistics, behaviorist theory, interlanguage, Philippine English, stimulus-response.*

**To cite this article:** Estremera, M. L. (2024). Behaviorist theory in Philippine English L2 acquisition: Transition point from L1 contact. *European Journal of English Language Studies*, 4(1), 39-52. <https://doi.org/10.12973/ejels.4.1.39>

### Introduction

There have been apparent global arguments by linguists on how practically L1 influences L2 acquisition such as the studies of Algazo (2018); Bingjun (2013); and De La Fuente and Goldenberg (2020). The former accentuates that role of L1 in L2 acquisition comprises 6 different tenets: (a) with the behavioral theory to clarify the SLA, concentrating on the role of conditions; (b) to illuminate the interaction of SLA, highlighting communication and social needs; (c) to expound the SLA with the cognitive theory, accentuating the logic and thinking procedures; (d) with the nativist theory or biological theory to describe SLA, stressing the innate genetic capacity; (e) to underscore the learner and learning strategies. (f) L1 transfer in L2 acquisition of phonetics, lexicology, syntax, semantics and pragmatics. As for Algazo (2018), the value of using the L1 as a teaching strategy may be overtly relayed to L2 teachers in training courses and workshops in order to capacitate teachers with the prerequisite skills to efficaciously undertake a teaching assignment. The preceding conclusions may help intensify the awareness of L2 teachers and enable them to benefit from strategic L1 usage as another pragmatic teaching technique when providing L2 instruction, and, in the same vein, be acquainted on how to avoid any undesirable consequences emanating from L1 overuse. Mulling over other relevant perspectives, Storch and Wigglesworth (2003) accentuate that the use of learners' L1 in L2 education has been a debatable linguistic issue. Language learners are typically discouraged to use their L1 during communications and classroom activities with the belief of less likelihood of successful L2 acquisition. Be that as it may, Iswati and Hadimulyono (2018) refuted the previous claim and stressed that the role of L1 both by teachers and learners in English classrooms at tertiary level has undoubtedly been indispensable. This is vouched by the findings that 70% of the teachers stated that L1 should be used in their class whilst 87% of students postulated that L1 should be used during explanation of difficult concepts of L2. First language likewise lessens learners' affective filter as it makes them more secure, comfortable, and eventually confident to use the target language. In effect, behaviorist theory claims that infants learn oral language from other human role models through a progression period involving imitation, rewards, and practice. Human role models in an infant's environment offer the stimuli and rewards (Reutzel & Cooter, 2004). When a child attempts oral language or emulates the sounds or speech forms, they are usually praised and given affection for their efforts. Accordingly, praise

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and affection becomes the reward. However, the behaviorist theory is scrutinized for a variety of reasons. One proof of this supposition is the study conducted by Mohamad Nor and Rashid (2018) who conjectures that there is no one solid linguistic theory which can provide the ultimate explanation of L1 acquisition and L2 learning as there are many interrelated factors that influence the success of language acquisition or language learning. The implication is that teachers should base their classroom management practices and pedagogical techniques on several theories rather than a single theory as learners learn and acquire language differently. On a final note, the limited studies locally and internationally as well as the perceived research gaps on behaviorist theory with its foreseen relevance to L2 acquisition in applied linguistics context are what the researcher hopes to fill.

## Literature Review

### *Bridging L1 and L2 Arguments*

According to Behaviorist Theory, Skinner (1985) equated learning a language to verbal behavior. Therefore, he believes that language acquisition like any other behavior can be observed, rather than trying to explain the mental systems underlying these types of behaviors. To him, children are born with a blank state of mind or *tabula rasa*. Children acquire L1 through stimuli given to them and the responses of children are conditioned through reinforcement. A positive response will be conditioned through positive reinforcement like reward or praise and vice versa for a negative response which is conditioned with punishment. Relating the above tenets of Skinner in applied linguistics context, several studies seem to verify its efficacy in language learning process specifically when associated to L2 acquisition. These are the studies piloted by Algazo (2018), Bingjun (2013), and De La Fuente and Goldenberg (2020) who correspondingly accentuated that L2 acquisition does not necessitate tedious drills; instead L1 shall be made as the bridge language to eventually acquire the target language (L2) in the classroom. This way, children feel accepted, comfortable, and become less anxious whenever they attempt to use L2 both in written and oral form (Iswati & Hadimulyono, 2018). The present study, as a matter of fact, attempts to challenge and validate the principles of behaviorist theory in second language acquisition in the context of applied linguistics by taking into account grammar



and reading activities as means to L2 acquisition by the subjects of the study. As for Ambridge and Lieven (2011) Skinner argued that children learn language based on behaviorist reinforcement principles by associating words with meanings. Correct utterances are positively reinforced when the child realizes the communicative value of words and phrases as underscored by Nikolaus and Fourtassi (2023); Anum et al. (2024); and Kasirzadeh and Gabriel (2023). For example, when the child says 'milk' and the mother will smile and give her some as a result, the child will find this outcome rewarding, enhancing the child's language development. However, the transfer from L1 to the target language (L2) is a different story and more intricate. In the case of the subjects of the study, they had been exposed to L1 from Kinder to Grade III currently in different language learning process from the what is familiar to what is to be discovered in terms of rules. In fact, L2 has different morphology, phonology, syntax and typology (see illustration below) from which linguistic challenges and problems arise. Moreover, Lardiere (2008); Muroya (2019); and Slabakova (2008) conjecture that inflectional morphology is deemed as one of the difficult linguistic areas as far as second language (L2) acquisition is concerned. Second language learners commit linguistic variability (*i.e.* misuse, overuse, omission) in the attempt to use functional morpholexical items (*e.g.* copulas, auxiliaries, markers for tense, aspect, agreement, determiners). For this, recent research in L2 acquisition has accordingly elucidated possible causes of the persistent divergence through the function of formal features (phonological, syntactic, and semantic) (Slabakova, 2016). Additionally, Hwang (2021) inferred that L2 learners adapt their production preferences following immediate and cumulative experience with a syntactic structure when an L2 structure differs from an L1 structure in terms of verb sub-categorization frame and argument structure [ *(i)* Jen had her computer fixed; *(ii)* Jen-NOM computer-ACC fixed]. In the highlighted sentences, Korean learners of English described causative events in English in a picture-matching game. Taking into consideration all the suppositions and assumptions relative to L2 acquisition from the lens of L1 learners, Islam (2013) likewise posits that all the theories provide some fresh insights into the psychology of language learning. Additionally, SLA studies follow sequential progress of FLA theories as well as interlanguage theories. Granting that each theory may not be a complete model for further inquiry of language acquisition, each of them provides a unique perspective of language acquisition. Interlanguage is a theoretical construct which underlies the attempts of SLA researchers to identify the stages of development through which L2 learners pass on their way to L2 proficiency (Alsaedi, 2023; Dai, 2023; Yuqi & Ren, 2023). SLA follows a 'universal' path that is principally uninfluenced by such factors as age of the learners, the context in which learning takes place, or the learners L1 background itself. According to this vista of SLA, the controlling factor is the faculty for language, that all human beings have (Diyenti Rusdin et al., 2024). On a final note, to establish a complete grasp of L1 to L2 transfer which basically is one of the chief purposes of the conduct of this case study, Cummins (1983) suggests a "dual-iceberg" analogy to delineate the transfer of bilingual learners' first language to the second language. In Commin's model, L1 and L2 proficiencies intersect with the common sector, which is below the "surface". In the separate sectors we find the surface features of the respective linguistic

structures of L1 and L2. As the double iceberg points out, superficially, L1 and L2 are separated abilities, but in effect, they overlap and share certain abstract universal principles and constraints common to all natural languages. L2 learners practice their language proficiency in two dissimilar modes, *i.e.* the native language and the second language, but skills, knowledge and rules mastered and developed in L1 can be easily converted into L2 fluency (Isakov, 2024; Yamashita et al., 2023).

#### *Transition Point from L1 Contact*

The passage of Republic Acts of The Philippines (2013) by legislators of the Philippines dubbed “Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013”, which involves Kindergarten to Grade 12 basic years of education equivalent to 7 elementary years, 4 Junior High School years and 2 Senior High School years with specific tracks according to interests and skills. This educational revision aims to offer ample time to learners towards ensuring mastery of expected skills and prerequisite concepts in preparation for higher cognitive activities. A graduate, on the other hand, of the basic education program is expected to be well-equipped for tertiary education, has developed middle-level skills for potential employment, with entrepreneurship ability for lifelong learning. The above-mentioned act was the primary reason with the use of English as L2 both as language of communication and instruction in teaching the major subjects such as Mathematics, Science and English (Estremera, 2017) to the subjects of the investigation. These students, in truth, are in transformation phase to the degree that they were taught using *Bicol Sorsogon* as L1 starting from Kinder until they reached Grade III. In like manner, Oracion et al. (2020); and Mohammad (2016) claim that the products of the new 12-year basic education curriculum must have produced learners who possess integrative skills which imply learners must apply the skills acquired in the preparation years to actual and practical situations outside the school’s premises. Learners must likewise possess effective skills in information and technology, efficient communication skills needed for employment, basic life and survival skills, and all forms of communication such as written, oral, digital and visual (Supa’at & Ihsan, 2023; Wu et al., 2023). Graduates must likewise be cognizant of Philippines culture for patriotism, possess high level self-image, contribute meaningfully in the community where they interact, and many other scientific and cognitive functions reflective of the efficacy of the revised and enhanced program. The preceding guidelines and stipulations by the department was the basis of Filipino teachers to put into practice the standards and competencies expected to Filipino learners across the country (Estremera, 2017). The present study attempted to capture how the respondents learn L2 being one of the recognized varieties of English in outer circle (Kachru, 1996). It includes morphological prowess, reading comprehension drills in the classroom, communication using the target language, speaking and writing activities as bridge towards second language (L2) functional acquisition.

### **Methodology**

The researcher aptly considered a *phenomenology* research design to delineate the intervening variables of the study (Fraenkel et al., 2012). This is under qualitative approach of exploring empirical data in the site of interest.

#### *Research Questions (RQs) & Assumptions*

The linguistic diversity of the Philippine speech landscape as well as the sheer interest of the author for applied linguistics studies has spurred the researcher to challenge the principles of behaviorist theory in PhE L2 acquisition (Bonifacio et al., 2021; Gonzales, 2016; Lising, 2021). This diversity provides a novelty aspect of the study since the preceding theory is principally grounded on L1 acquisition in sociolinguistic context. Thus, providing philosophical results to the challenged theory in present context sheds light to the applicability of the said theory in L2 acquisition as well. This study, conversely, aims to address the following research questions:

- How does first language (L1) influence L2 acquisition from the lens of applied linguistics?
- How do the principles of behaviorist theory apply in L2 acquisition?

For the preceding questions, the following assumptions were proposed to guide the researcher in the acceptance or rejection of research findings:

- First language (L1) of the participants greatly influences in the Philippine English (PhE) L2 acquisition considering applied linguistics view
- Features of behaviorist theory plays an essential role in Philippine English (PhE) L2 acquisition of the participants in the classroom setting

#### *Context & Participants*

The subject of this academic piece had been the 23 fourth grader L2 learners of Marinas I Elementary School for A.Y. 2019-2020. Researcher was not able to consider other schools due to restrictions caused by the pandemic; however, issue of research bias was solved by religiously highlighting the data gathered in the name of research ethics. Besides, since this undertaking is a research output in one of the author’s subjects, he was advised by the professor to consider his own school as a subject of the study. Purposive sampling was considered to capture the essence of the study and

provide answers to the framed RQs. Participants are considered based on their L1 exposure from the previous grade level having now English both as a subject and a medium of instruction termed commonly as a transitional phase grade level in the Philippines' education system. Researcher, on the other hand, pragmatically selected the informants taking into account the data that can potentially be gathered from them through various phases of the study. Besides, the accentuated school has been strategically situated since researcher himself is one of the teachers therein. More importantly, the site of interest comprises a multilingual speech community to the extent that most interlocutors specifically the participants speak *Bicol Sorsogon (lingua franca)*, Filipino (*national language*), and English (*generally deemed as L2*) in the school setting. This richness in linguistic diversity contributed to the practicality aspect of the study. To supplement, the 12 years functioning as plain classroom teacher has paved the way for the data collection processes due to the familiarity of the research site contributing to the credibility of exploring linguistic studies.

#### *Data Collection Procedures*

Initially, school head and English teacher of the purposively selected participants had been notified regarding the noble purpose of the conduct of study for possible guidance. In effect, collecting processes commenced months of August until November 2019. Gathering procedures include Focused Group Discussion (FGD) involving Grade 2 to Grade 4 L2 teachers. There was a need also to gather data through empirical means such documentations and interviews. These are reflected in the study in form of pictures and transcribed classroom interactions serving as the main data to investigate how evident are the principles of behaviorism in the language acquisition of the participants. The gathered data during the interview was incorporated in the discussion part. As Krueger and Casey (2008) emphasize, FGD offers a more realistic atmosphere than any other procedures since respondents are in close contact with researchers. As for the interview component, the present pursuit acquiesces to the vista of Fraenkel et al. (2012) who underscore that the interview process is essential to come-up with accurate data for qualitative studies specifically. Researcher, in a nutshell, considered a semi-structure type to gather pertinent data thereby enriching the information and data gathered. As a matter of fact, former mentors in linguistic studies were likewise interviewed to fix misalignment and ensure cohesion of gathered information.

#### *Data Analysis*

After securing all the data as well as pertinent information, researcher considered varied data analyzes techniques such as synthesizing and thematic categorization which fall under the purview of qualitative inquiry. Thus, to properly highlight the explored variables, a mixed approach of theoretical analysis (TA) and empirical analysis (EA) were deemed significant. The theoretical analysis component of this study involves the investigation of the features of behaviorist theory itself and its applicability and relevance in acquiring L2. It is theoretical in nature since it challenges the main principles behind the theory by analyzing its essential characteristics. Conversely, the empirical analysis component of this study is the use of observable data such as documentations, transcriptions and speech drills as transpired inside the classroom. These combined analyses of data are categorized under qualitative design (Collins & Stockton, 2018) which the present inquiry has adopted. These analyses techniques are underpinned by Saldaña and Omasta (2018) who conjectured that there have been three main features of theory in qualitative pursuits (a) the concept of research paradigm and method (Glesne, 2011), (b) the hypothesis of establishing as an outcome of data gathering procedures (Jaccard & Jacoby, 2010), and (c) the theory as a model to undertake the investigation (Anfara & Mertz, 2014). Consequently, to highlight the essential components of the theory under exploration in the context of the research participants, principles of behaviorism had been scrutinized cautiously to come-up with reliable findings and philosophical data capturing its contemporary relevance in 21<sup>st</sup> century L2 teaching and learning. This is linked to the perspective of Jasso (1998) who conjectured that the main aim of theory-grounded analysis involves postulation and logical thinking. As for the current undertaking, it took into account the principles of behaviorist theory itself as a starting point of investigation to cull-out newly formulated suppositions and hypotheses. Furthermore, to accordingly analyze thereby contribute to the body of knowledge, documentation and transcription had been undertaken to capture L2 linguistic attempts by the subjects of the study such as speaking activities in the classroom, linguistic reinforcement activities, reading activities, grammar exercises, learner-learner interaction, learner-teacher communication, tone, and rewards employed by the teacher to motivate learners to explore L2. These language activities and phenomena are part and parcel of effective language learning both L1 and L2 processes. This is where EA component is evident to come-up logical results (Huebner et al., 2016). As accentuated by Cooper et al. (2017), empirical analysis of data principally involves the five significant senses. In this study, this involves transcription, documentations, and verbatim responses of the students necessary to capture L2 linguistic processes. Therefore, it is an essential part of establishing scientific findings attained *via* close scrutiny of concepts, basic cognitive process, frameworks and brainstorming.

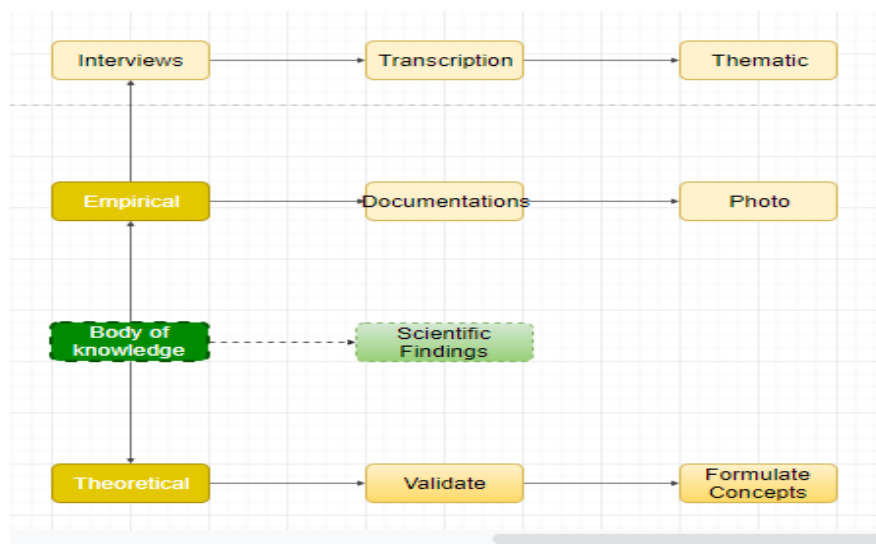


Figure 1. Data Analyses Processes

### Ethical Considerations

The primary sources of data of this academic piece were 4<sup>th</sup> grader pupils who are expectedly minors. Hence, ethical considerations during data gathering phase had been exerted to the utmost extent to avoid breach of research protocol and future problems associated to data privacy, confidentiality and anonymity of identity. With these premises, researcher ensured that parents of the subjects of study were informed through a consent letter of the noble purpose of the conduct of study. Besides, a communication was likewise floated to the school head and teacher concerned expressing the intention to explore behaviorist theory principles' applicability to the present context of L2 teaching-learning process. As to funding source or fund application to any entity, author also declares that no single move has been undertaken for the above purpose.

### Results

Two excerpts are considered in order to capture how the PhE is learnt in a transitional context from L1 exposure in the lower grade levels to the introduction of L2 in fourth grade. Moreover, this study also anchors its findings to the interlanguage theory of L2 acquisition; hence, datasets included capture the seemingly overlapping influence of L1 over L2 when students attempt to produce sentences verbally. In converting the transcribed classroom interfaces into texts, only those which pose relevance to the framed RQs are considered to observe consistency of data. Social context of L2 acquisition is not highlighted in the datasets.

*Excerpt 1:* The excerpt started when the teacher asked review questions to see whether learners have imbibed the past lesson or not. This likewise provided the researcher opportunity to capture how PhE is assimilated in pedagogical context highlighting some of the linguistic elements and processes to L2 acquisition such as learners' speech attempts, grammar practice, teacher's linguistic input, frequency of communicative and linguistic activities, skimming and scanning sessions, and varied morphological drills as inputs to successful L2 assimilation in the classroom context.

#### Excerpt 1

- X<sup>1</sup> Can anyone remember our previous lesson before we explore a new lesson today?



Figure #2

- X<sup>2</sup> Sa tingin ko po mam... ano  
\*I think teacher...uhmm, it was...
- X<sup>3</sup> May kinalaman sa possessive nouns.  
\*It involves possessive nouns.
- X<sup>4</sup> Great answer! Anyone knows about it? Give examples please.
- X<sup>5</sup> Maria's pencil po.
- X<sup>6</sup> Peter's bag po mam.

(Lesson continues L2 speech attempts is established)

- X<sup>7</sup> Can you differentiate between abstract and concrete nouns children? Can I hear some sentences using those given words?
- X<sup>8</sup> John Paul feels happy.
- X<sup>9</sup> Our flagpole is high.



Figure #3

(L2 practice continues...)

- X<sup>10</sup> Children, for you to learn more about our lesson, I will give an activity for you to accomplish in group. Inside the envelope are instructions for you to follow. Good Luck!

(Learners use L2 in presenting their output)



Figure #4

- X<sup>11</sup> The table is hard and big.
- X<sup>12</sup> Christine have a very big nose and long hairs.
- X<sup>13</sup> My friend is have a kind pet and he is happy.
- X<sup>14</sup> The buildings is high in the school and plenty.

x-----x

Grammar exercises play an essential role to master the morphological and syntactic features of L2. It exposes learners to varied and meaningful linguistic drills leading to awareness and functional use of L2 in various forms such as speaking, writing and listening macro skills. For this academic piece, it envisions to highlight empirically how the previous linguistic occurrences interplay with one another. In fact, line X<sup>1</sup> implies that teacher concerned is ensuring that prior knowledge is activated through a *question-answer* technique of the past lesson tackled. The responses of the

students as captured are indicative of their readiness to explore the new lesson. This is vouched by line X<sup>2</sup>, Y<sup>5</sup>, and X<sup>6</sup> as speech attempts of the learners infusing L1 to complete the communication process and sentences formulated in L2. Noticeably, Filipino politeness expressions such as *po* and *opo* are inevitably inserted for every L2 attempts of some inquisitive learners. These politeness markers embody Philippine culture whenever communicating to someone. Despite the palpable code-switching occurrences in traversing L2 proficiency, one learner is able to utter accurate sentence structure as appeared in line X<sup>3</sup> of the excerpt. Upon confirmation of learning readiness, teacher under study proceeded the lesson by presenting a short text from which triggering questions have been asked. Learners enthusiastically answered the motivating questions formulating simple sentences using L2. Empirically, some learners still integrate L1 in conveying their responses to the stimuli given which the teacher accepted as a leeway and a form of encouragement to explore L2. In fact, majority of learners are able to formulate accurate sentences using abstract and concrete pronouns confirmed by line X<sup>8</sup> & X<sup>9</sup>. Minor errors are then corrected by the teacher as the lesson progresses. To reinforce language learning specifically morphological order and sentence patterns, the teacher conducted a group performance task to concertize the assimilation of simple sentence attempts by the learners. Prior to the exploration of group task, teacher oriented the learners of the standards to follow to come-up with desired linguistic output. Learners were also permitted to use L1 or L2 or combinations of L1 & L2 for the sake efficient transmission of message. As observed, pupils feel more comfortable and have less apprehension while discovering the intricacies of L2. This redounded to the accomplishment of language activity since each group had been able to successfully present their output reinforcing syntax and grammar acquisition. Some of L2 sentences formulated by the learners under study are captured by discourse line X<sup>11</sup>, X<sup>12</sup>, X<sup>13</sup>, & X<sup>14</sup>. These sentences have errors in terms of argument morphology, nevertheless, these flaws could have been deemed negligible due to students' limited exposure to L2 and may just be reinforced in the succeeding lessons and even grade levels. In fact, collective output of the learners is indicative of high L2 competence given their young age. Moreover, this empirical validation of Behaviorist Theory in L2 acquisition would also like to capture how teachers concertize the knowledge of learners through evaluation of the lesson in form of test. For this aim, the teacher assessed the linguistic competence by giving a written activity. The assessment reflects the failure or success of varied linguistic activities by the teacher. As documented, many pupils have gotten high scores confirming a high performance level for the lesson objective of differentiating abstract and concrete nouns. The noted high performance of learners may be associated to learners' readiness, instructional materials used, text, thematic lesson, affective filter and classroom management. Furthermore, teacher's manner of questioning and language use has spurred the enthusiasm of L2 learners redounding to the successful conclusion of the lesson. To recapitulate, *Excerpt 1* presents the grammar skill of the participants based on stimuli provided by the teacher. Generally, learners have assimilated the essential skills to functionally explore the intricacies of L2 acquisition. The trivial flaws will be refined while discovering L2 by means of initiating relatable linguistic activities appropriate to their level. The permission of using L1 while forming L2 sentences added to the morale of the students to successfully carry-out the activities forming an affirmative classroom learning atmosphere. This interlanguage phenomenon is graphically presented below.

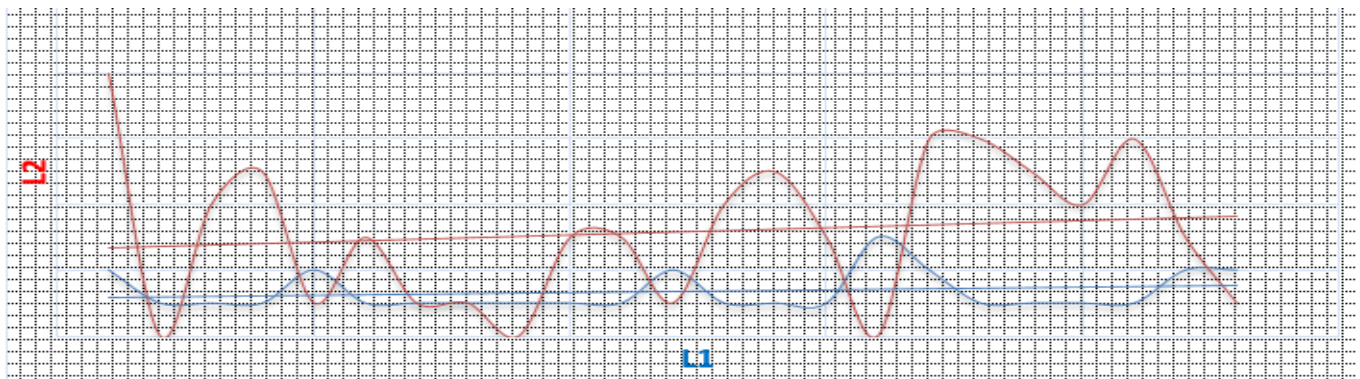


Figure 5. The Interlanguage Phenomenon

*Excerpt 2:* Reading in the target language and exposing the learners to English texts has been one of the key activities being employed by L2 teachers in the classroom worldwide. It has likewise been deemed as one of the preliminary techniques in allowing learners to discover the essential linguistic features towards L2 acquisition (Estremera & Estremera, 2018). On account of this statement, researcher exploited documentation as well as transcription techniques to obtain empirical data such as questioning strategy of the teacher, conversation attempts using L2, lexical range and vocabulary level of the subject of study. Extension activities like assignments and other reading strategies are also considered significant data.

- Y1 I am requesting everyone in group B to proceed in front and read aloud the short text I have given you.



Figure #6

- Y2 What does the text or story try to tell you as a reader? Is there any message that the author likes to express?

Does it remind something?

- Y3 our surroundings *po mam*  
 Y4 it is about the benefits of trees to us human *po*  
 Y5 the bad effects of no trees anymore in the forest  
 Y6 people must plant, water and care the trees

[lesson progresses]

- Y7 Who are mentioned in the text you read?  
 How did they use trees? What happened after cutting the three that has grown for many years? Why?

Y8 there are persons cutting trees without replanting *po*.

Y9 great idea Carl! Anymore answers class?

Y10 the people use trees to make house and get food *po*.

Y11 Some people are cutting for their house renovate.

Y12 Now class, recalling the selection you read, what have your learned? Are tress important to us? What should we then after cutting?

Y13 *mam!* Tree gives us shade and yummy food.

Y14 those who cut trees should replant *po*.

Y15 As a young pupil, we must plant more tree in school.

Y16 Amazing answers from you children! Now, it's time for our speaking practice.

[next observation day]

Y17 A pleasant morning children. For our reading session, please examine the pictures I have posted on the board. Think of words that best describe it. Be ready to share it later.

Y18 *mam tabi po, larawan* or picture of an insect.

Y19 Exactly that is! So children, I want you to scan your book to the page that I will dictate. Read altogether!



Figure #7



[lesson continues]

Y<sup>20</sup> For you to learn more about our lesson today, I am have prepared a group activity for you. Each member must cooperate in trying to follow the instructions given inside the envelope.



Figure #8

x-----x

The present study initially acquiesces to the supposition that reading as one of the macro-skills in L2 learning is one of the ways of exposing learners to various and meaningful texts. It has been deemed as an efficient technique for vocabulary enhancement to reach the extent of successful reading (Estremera & Estremera, 2018). To provide empirical data for the first RQ of the study, researcher conducted class observation procedure as captured by line Y<sup>1</sup> and Figure 6. The lesson objective has to do with identifying elements of the text read. Teacher began the lesson by reading aloud in group (Figure 6). This gave the teacher an opportunity to monitor the reading prowess of students since everyone is expected to aloud altogether. After reading the text, teacher initiated a comprehension check through *wh-questions* where learners based their responses. In truth, line Y<sup>2</sup>, Y<sup>3</sup>, Y<sup>4</sup>, Y<sup>5</sup> & Y<sup>6</sup> are transcribed replies of the students based on stimulus triggered. As documented, learners were able to respond appropriately to the questions floated by the teacher; nonetheless, some answers comprise phrasal as well as independent clauses with complete thought. Slight errors and infusion of L1 are likewise observed. As the validation progresses, teacher asked some questions satiating the lesson objective (line Y<sup>7</sup>), which is to identify the elements of the story read. These questions triggered for the production of the speech L2 attempts by the learners. In effect, line Y<sup>8</sup>, Y<sup>9</sup>, Y<sup>10</sup> & Y<sup>11</sup> are captured responses of enthusiastic learners who are able to respond immediately by coming-up with correct answers practicing L2 speaking skills. Figure 9 delineates clearly the stimulus-response feature of behaviorism as occurred in the classroom.

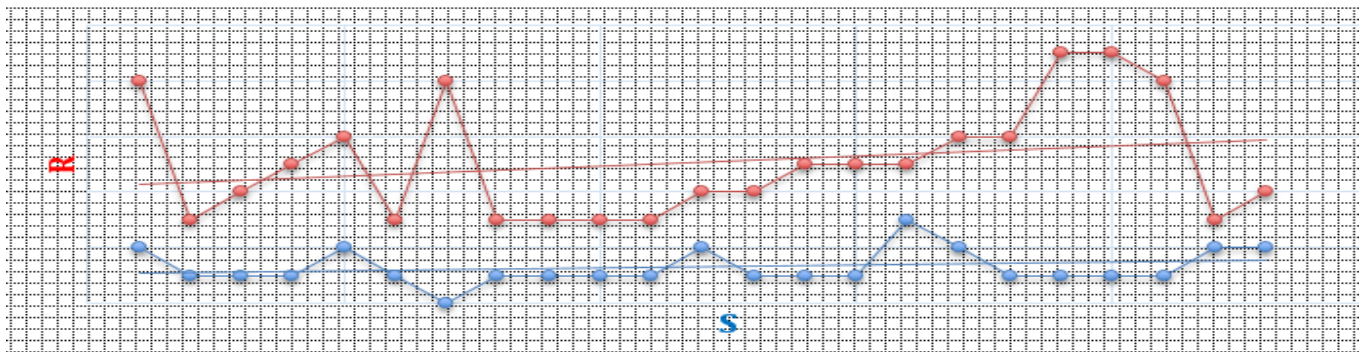


Figure 9. Behaviorist Theory in L2 Acquisition

Be that as it may, there had been noted negligible errors in sentence production and integration of mother tongue anew. These sentences could have been indicative of the influence practically of L1 in trying to be proficient in L2 at the same time. Empirically, teacher commended those students who participated actively in class discussion (line Y<sup>12</sup>). Some learners were also encouraged to practice speaking in the session. The empirical exploration was concluded *via* reinforcement activity given by the teacher to be answered at home (line Y<sup>13</sup>, Y<sup>14</sup>, Y<sup>15</sup> & Y<sup>16</sup>). As for the teacher observed, this will be the writing in L2 phase of the lesson to concertize the prerequisite skills imbibed during lesson proper. To further satiate RQ1, another observation technique was undertaken on 8<sup>th</sup> day of October 2019 following research and health etiquette. The lesson to be explored has to do with identifying elements of the story exactly resembling the first lesson objective. As for the teacher, different texts and questions shall be utilized in the duration of the lesson. This is to ensure that initial reading competencies learned are reinforced to ensure permanency in learning. Teacher now greets the pupils serving as a way to make learners ready and set the tone of the day (line Y<sup>17</sup>). A picture was already posted on the board from which responses using L2 were drawn. One recorded response was captured by line Y<sup>18</sup> implying that those were pictures of a bug crawling on tree branch. Notably, the response is again a mixed of L1

and L2. Filipino traditional politeness markers in communication whether formally or informally are still used. Upon setting the tone, teacher proceeded to the next activity which is group reading to ensure that all can read understandably the selection. At this juncture, several activities were initiated by the teacher parallel the lesson objective such as group work, peer-reading activity, and meaningful speaking drills before assessment had been done (Y<sup>19</sup> & Y<sup>20</sup>).

### Discussion

#### *L1 Influence in L2 Acquisition*

Taking into consideration the results adopting empirical analysis of data, several themes emerged out of the research assumptions of the study. Thus, from the dataset, it can be observed that in learning L2, L1 plays a significant role in order to convey messages, express opinions and participate in the class discussion (Figure 8). In fact, student participants possess the basic linguistic requirements in order to explore L2 effectively. Minor syntactic and morphologic errors are observed but are soon refined through a series of stimulus-response linguistic occurrences during classroom L2 practice and drills. Notably, the low affective filter by the teacher and favorable learning milieu established during TLP also contributed to the successful L2 acquisition. Students explored the target language during classroom discourse, written outputs, and reinforcement activities (Estremera & Gilbas, 2022). Use of L1 both by the teacher and the participants whenever necessary allows for the formation of a conducive learning atmosphere which made the participants confident to construct sentences and clauses using L2 progressively (Estremera, 2021; Estremera & Gonzales, 2021). In effect, the foregoing linguistic diagram indicates the index of L1 over L2 use during the class observation of the researcher. Featured diagram may also denote that L1 is still important in L2 successful acquisition. This is vouched by Iswati and Hadimulyono (2018) who stressed that the role of L1 both by teachers and learners in English classrooms at tertiary level has undoubtedly been indispensable. This is vouched by the findings that 70% of the teachers stated that L1 should be used in their class whilst 87% of students postulated that L1 should be used during explanation of difficult concepts of L2. First language likewise lessens learners' affective filter as it makes them more secure, comfortable, and eventually confident to use the target language. In the process, students will just be able to discover morphology, syntax and semantics of L2 (Song et al., 2020) essential in their reading, writing and speaking prowess (De La Fuente & Goldenberg, 2020). The preceding claims are essential in dealing with L2 learners whose vocabulary stockpile are not that sufficient which hamper them from practicing the target language instantly. They feel hesitant to practice L2 both in oral and in written forms. At some point, they mix L1 and L2 morphologically in responding to stimuli to complete the cycle of communication. In this scenario, the role of EFL teachers count a lot in order to gradually guide L2 learners through meaningful linguistic exposures.

#### *Behaviorist Theory in L2 Acquisition*

The evident interlanguage occurrence as transcribed during classroom context interfaces reveal the overlying influence of L1 over L2 when students attempt to construct sentences orally. Hence, excerpts 1 & 2 validate the principles of behaviorism in the context of L2 acquisition taking into consideration applied linguistics perspective. Inferring from the empirical exploration, it was validated that linguistic phenomena such as reading sessions using L2 texts, speaking drills, syntax and morphological exercises insofar as the subject of study is concerned have played a pivotal role to reach L2 fluency. As a matter of fact, question-answer/stimulus-response strategy of the teacher has played an essential part for the amelioration of grammatical and reading skills of the learners as documented. To supplement, the extended written tasks initiated likewise paved the way for PhE assimilation in L2 learning milieu (Estremera, 2023). As for Skinner (1985), he conjectures that language learning like any other behavior can be observed, rather than attempting to explicate the intellectual systems underlying these variety of behaviors. Behaviorist theory speculates that children are born having a blank state of mind or *tabula rasa*. Children adopt L1 through stimuli given to them and the bodily process of children are conditioned through reinforcement. An affirmative response will be conditioned through positive reinforcement like reward or praise and vice versa for an antagonistic reaction which is conditioned through punishment as well. Relating applied linguistics context, the above-mentioned view of Skinner (1985) has likewise been underpinned by the findings of Algazo (2018); Bingjun (2013); and De La Fuente and Goldenberg (2020) who similarly emphasize that L2 assimilation does not necessitate tiring drills; rather mother tongue may serve as a bridge to assimilate the intricacies of the L2 during teaching-learning processes. In this hereby, learners would develop self-esteem, autonomy and enthusiasm in discovering L2 using various forms such as speaking and writing. Students will also less likely to exhibit linguistic apprehensions to L2 learning (Iswati & Hadimulyono, 2018). This paper therefore agrees to the significant features of behaviorist theory applicable in L2 assimilation. The verified role of behaviorist theory confirm the fluidity of existing theories to learning. One cannot, therefore, claim that a specific theory is meant only to a single phenomenon. The ever changing linguistic landscape and dynamism component of language acquisition account for these occurrences. As the world of language acquisition continues to evolve, the same applies the existing theories potentially. Supplementary characteristics may emerge as an allegory of a new model or even enhanced version of the original theory.

## Conclusion

### *How does L1 influence L2 acquisition from the lens of Applied linguistics?*

RQ1 serves as the point of inquiry in order to provide scientific and empirical data. Hence, from the results down to the discussion, the researcher now accepts the assumption that first language (L1) of the participants greatly influences in the Philippine English (PhE) L2 acquisition considering the applied linguistics view. Students make use of the L1 patterns and morphological sequence in an attempt to formulate sentences and clauses in the target language. The teacher's low affective filter offers students an affirmative learning atmosphere vital in discovering the how's & why's of L2. The sentences formulated show minor errors but are semantically accepted for the sake of communication. Moreover, the noted first language use during classroom discourses is indicative of L1 influence over L2 language processes. From these premises, EFL teachers may be able to understand fully the L2 learning pace of students under the transition phase. The gravity of linguistic activities inside the classroom will also be considered in favor of the learning styles and cultural background of L2 students.

### *How do the principles of Behaviorist Theory apply in L2 acquisition?*

The results and discussion part of this undertaking offered ample evidences on the adaptability of behaviorist theory in PhE L2 acquisition have led to the acceptance of second assumption that features of behaviorist theory plays an essential role in Philippine English (PhE) L2 acquisition of the participants in the classroom setting. Linguistic strategies employed by the teacher such as stimulus-response, communicative L2 drills, groups works, and extension activities as primary features of the explored theory has contributed to successful L2 assimilation. In effect, reward develops affirmative behavior of learners pushing them to explore more the nitty-gritty of L2. Through empirical observation, stimulus-response contributed to the improvement of speaking, reading and listening ability of L2 learners. EFL teachers, in the process, could assess the reading speed and speech competence adopting the theory's vital principles to bring their learners to the level of L2 functionality.

## Recommendations

*Educational implications-* Taking into account the findings, discussion and conclusion of the study, this paper has contributed to the body of knowledge specifically along L2 acquisition. Hence, the educational implications of this academic piece will serve as an input for EFL/ESL teachers globally in an attempt to fully understand their learners as far as learning rate, vocabulary range, gravity of linguistic drills, and language attitude of learners are concerned (Estremera, 2021, 2023; Fakher Ajabshir, 2021), especially primary language teaching (Ben Maad, 2022). ESL teachers will most likely be able to teach L2 successfully by taking into account the essential findings and results of this endeavor. They may also possess better understanding of the multicultural background of their learners (Turebayeva et al., 2020). EFL teachers could similarly give suited teaching materials and communicatory activities to guide the learners towards having high L2 competence gradually (Estremera, 2021).

*Stakeholders-* School decision makers may be able to propose and initiate projects and interventions with the aim of developing the linguistic ability of their learners bearing in mind the interconnected factors to L2 assimilation.

*Researchers-* The verified influence of behaviorist theory offers a room for relevant studies to be conducted by considering other relevant components such as phonology, pragmatics, phonetics, and cultural understanding influences.

## Limitations

This study is limited within the purview of validating only the principles of behaviorist theory in L2 learning from an applied linguistics view. Thus, since the data gathering procedures are somewhat limited, researcher suggests for a more comprehensive data gathering techniques to practically capture the theory's vital implications to L2 acquisition. Phonology, pragmatics, phonetics, and cultural understanding influences are suggested areas for further investigation. By this, a better version of the theory may emerge by conducting parallel studies depicting 21<sup>st</sup> century learners learning styles and skills.

## Ethics Statements

This study followed the protocol on permits when subjects of the study are minor. A detailed description is found under methodology part of the study.

## Acknowledgments

Heartfelt gratitude is extended to the school principal, teachers, and students in the research site.

## Conflict of Interest

Author declares no conflict of interest to any entity or organization in any form.

## Funding

Author did not receive any fund nor applied for possible funding to any entity.

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