



The role of universal grammar in second language acquisition

Henner Kaatz

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Seminar paper from the year 2007 in the subject English - Pedagogy, Didactics, Literature Studies, grade: 2,0, Technical University of Braunschweig (Fachbereich für Geistes- und Erziehungswissenschaft, Englisches Seminar), course: Language Acquisition, 5 entries in the bibliography, language: English, abstract: All students in the seminar "Language Acquisition" (SS 07) are obligated to write a term paper about an issue which fits into the course subject matter. In this case, the topic "The Role of Universal Grammar in Second Language Acquisition" was chosen. The seminar deals with both, first and second language acquisition. The main focus lies on German and English. However, the course is not supposed to deal with a contrastive view but rather a descriptive way of analyzing language acquisition in general and with a specific concentration on English. The following term paper, primarily, deals with second language acquisition and the Role of Universal Grammar (UG) in the course of the on-going acquisition process. The UG approach is an issue which is often discussed within the linguistic science and the opinions about it are highly diverged. Not only in Second Language Acquisition (SLA), but also in First Language Acquisition the Universal Grammar approach is often seen as not verified, or on the other hand, as opposed to, it is viewed as the only solution to the mysterious question of language acquisition. This term paper defines the essential different sights of UG and its role in the process of SLA. The main question of the paper is: "Does UG plays a role in SLA and if so, what kind of role?" Another issue is whether only UG influences SLA or the first language governs acquisition of a second language. Some researchers even state that there is no UG in language acquisition and others say that UG is 'dead' in SLA. There are a bunch of opinions on this topic and all of them show evidence, more or less persuasive. It is not possible to explain all the different aspects of research and all the data and experiments concerning UG and SLA in this term paper. Nevertheless, this paper describes some of the essential views on how UG plays a role in SLA and additionally what kind of influence first language (L1) can possibly have on the process of SLA. Considering L1, UG and L2 is necessary because L1 acquisition is definitely different from SLA. Bilingual aspects are not considered in this context. To describe and define the most important expressions, the paper starts with definitions, before the so-called Logical Problem of Language Acquisition and the differences between L1 and L2 acquisition are portrayed. The main part is about the Role of L1 (transfer) and the access to UG in SLA.

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