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ABSTRACT

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This thesis deals with grammar school students' awareness of second language acquisition. The work examines six different SLA theories based on reputable authors, and investigates the students' level of agreement with them. The examined theories are as follows: Behaviorist Theory, Nativist Theory, Creative Construction Theory, Natural Approach, Interlanguage and its Psycholinguistic Aspects. The result of the questionnaire shows awareness of some of the theories as well as it shows variance or disagreement towards the others.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Second language acquisition is a scientific field of interest that investigates the human capacity to learn languages. It is an inquiry that focuses on learning other languages than the first one: "It seeks to understand universal, individual and social forces that influence what gets acquired, how fast, and how well, by different people under different learning circumstances"(Ortega, 2008, p. 10). Some researchers tried to find differences within the terms *learning* and *acquisition*, while others consider them as synonyms. In this work, both terms are used as synonyms, expressing the same meaning that of process of language development.

SLA covers the whole development of human's language, from its very beginnings in childhood to adulthood. SLA usually focuses on stages after early childhood, but it very often compares the development of first and second languages. To quote Lourdes Ortega (2008) directly, "SLA investigates additional language learning in late childhood, adolescence or adulthood and focuses on the pathways towards becoming competent in the second language"(p. 10).

Inquiries of SLA started in the second half of 20th century. This was caused mainly by an expansion of languages after World War II and later via internet and other spreading media. Mastering another language than the first one has become mandatory for securing employment or obtaining education. It is quite understandable that it led to a need to discover more about how second languages are learned (Ellis, 1997, p.3).

This work is divided into Theoretical and Practical parts. The Theoretical part provides information about SLA principles and theories, that serves as a basis for Practical part. The Practical part deals with first language acquisition , and it is followed by examination of SLA theories. The practical part provides research based on those theories which is further commented in Implications chapter, where I suggest practical use of information gained in research part.

II. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

This chapter deals with some SLA theories. First of all, first language acquisition is examined which serves as basis for understanding SLA problematic. Then I introduce the SLA theories one by one.

First language acquisition

Before we start understanding how SLA works, it is essential to have at least common knowledge about how language acquisition works. It is believed that it works on the same, or at least very similar, principle as the acquisition of the first language. In this section, I mention some of the theories which can explain how people learn language. The theories are: Behaviorist Theory, Innatist Theory and Interactionist Theory. Other keywords also important in this chapter are Learning Acquisition Device and Critical Period Hypothesis. Information provided in this is mostly based on Lightbown and Spada's publication *How Languages are Learned* from 1999. The Behaviorist Theory

There are more definitions of Behaviorist theory, thus I selected the one from Lightbown and Spada's publication mentioned above:

Traditional behaviorists believed that language learning is simply a matter of imitation and habit formation. Children imitate the sounds and patterns which they hear around them and receive positive reinforcement for doing so (Lightbown & Spada, 1993, 1).

We could understand this in a way that children actually only imitate and reproduce whatever they hear in their environment. They are stimulated by that environment, and every time they receive any positive feedback, it stimulates them to create habits of correct language. So to say, environment forms and influences children's language. However, the process of imitation lasts until the language is well enrooted in learner's language system. Based on Lightbown and Spada's detail analysis of conversations between a child and a parent, we can see that after successful acquisition of some language items, a child stops imitation of every available input, and imitates only those inputs that are new for it, or even starts to make errors caused by misunderstanding e.g. synonyms or generalization. Nevertheless, those mistakes make us understand the way the children's language is learned.

This theory offers an answer of how children learn basics of a language and everyday conversation. Unfortunately, it can't explain how children learn more complex grammatical structures (Lightbown & Spada, 1993).

The Innatist Theory

The innatist position basically states that a child's biological predispositions make an infant speak by itself, that they are innate. It is, of course, based on the language of people in a child's environment. Chomsky compares the acquisition of first language to learning to walk. As every child can learn walking without being taught, it can do the same with language. "The linguist Noam Chomsky claims that children are biologically programmed for language and that language develops in the child in just the same way that other biological functions develop" (Lightbown & Spada, 1993, p. 7).

Chomsky's criticism of the behaviorist theory is based on an inability to answer the question of learning complex grammatical structures and the whole structure of the language. A child is mostly taught very simple phrases, and then somehow understands the rest. Chomsky also mentions confusion coming from the information provided by environment such as incomplete sentences or slips of a tongue.

We refer to this phenomenon of being able to acquire language automatically as about so-called language acquisition device (LAD). This topic is more covered later in the thesis, but in a simplified way, it is described as "an imaginary 'black box' which exists somewhere in the brain. This 'black box', which is thought to contain all and only the principles which are universal to all human languages, prevents the child from going off on lots of wrong trails in trying to discover the rules of the language" (Lightbown & Spada, 1993, 8). A child only needs samples of natural language which can activate the function of LAD which then leads to the ability to discover whole language by children themselves. A child is able to match its innate grammar to a language in its environment. In recent writings, this phenomenon is often replaced by so-called Universal Grammar (UG) which is considered to consist of a set of principles which are common to all languages" (Lightbown & Spada, 1993, 8).

Chomsky compared first language acquisition to learning to walk, because both follow phases common to all children. Biological basis for the innatist position lies within a simple fact that if a child is not exposed to sufficient input, it can lose the ability to learn language at

all (which is similar to learning how to walk). We call the period the Critical Period Hypothesis (CPH)

The critical period hypothesis refers, as mentioned above, to a period of age when one has to learn language. This can happen, when a child is not stimulated by external factors due to deafness or isolation (e.g. feral children). According to Lightbown and Spada, we distinguish two versions of CPH:

"The strong version is that children must acquire their first language by puberty or they will never be able to learn from subsequent exposure. The weak version is that language learning will be more difficult and incomplete after puberty" (Lightbown & Spada, 1993, p. 11)

We don't really need to take CPH in consideration while talking about adult learners, but in some cases we can come across a case of a bilingual child, where the functions of LAD and CPH can appear quite important.

The Interactionist Position

The Interactionist Theory comes from interaction, mostly between a child and its parents and/or siblings. According to Lightbown, the difference of this point of view in comparison to innatist is: "The interactionists claim that a language which is modified to suit the capability of the learner is a crucial element in the language acquisition process" (Lightbown & Spada, 1993, p. 14). The way adults speak to children is often called 'Caretaker talk'. It mostly consists of slowed speech, higher pitch, varied intonation, shorter and simpler sentence patterns, frequent repetition and paraphrase. Parents usually talk only about what is comprehensible to a child based on here-and-now principle. It is a feature which provides children with the input they need by intuitive responding by adults. Moreover, adults often correct a child and also add some new vocabulary. This attitude may be important, because one-to-one interaction is very helpful in acquiring language (Lightbown & Spada, 1993).

Summary

To sum up, the three positions that are the most recognized show us three different aspects of language learning. The behaviorist position is about repetition and learning basics of the language. The innatist position tends to explain how grammar is learned and the interactionist position points out the importance of interaction between a learner and a

speaker. This section provide us with sufficient ideas of how first language acquisition works, which seems quite important before proceeding to issues in second language acquisition for there are some similarities in acquiring both of them.

Second Language Acquisition

Development of SLA

To start with, I would like to present short history of development of SLA as a field of study. As far as I am able to judge, there is much to be written about history and development of this field of interest. Nevertheless, based on the information found in various linguistic publications and SLA research studies, I try to summarize this into a form suitable for this diploma thesis. Let us then have a look into a brief history of Second Language Acquisition. The Behaviorist Theory, Nativist Theory, Theory of Interlanguage, and Natural Approach are the most recognized philosophies created during the development of SLA. It is crucial to stop and have a look at the theories for being able to understand the whole concept of SLA.

Beginnings

The beginnings of Second Language Acquisition are to be found in the 1940s and 1950s. It was caused by rising interest of language learning and teaching in the United States during and after World War II. This increasing interest was caused by the need for effective language skills both for communication with allies and for intelligence and counterintelligence work against enemies. Government in the US requested the services of prominent linguists such as Leonard Bloomfield and Charles Fries in development of specialized language courses.

The second reason was the development of language theories which has come to be known as American structuralist linguistics. The linguists gathered language data in naturalistic settings, and then wrote the rules of the language. The goal was to characterize the syntactic structure of sentences in terms of their grammatical categories and surface arrangements. But however, the main goal was not to study how the languages work in a way they do, but how the languages are learned. This leads to a field of research which we know as behaviorism (Block, 2003).

Behaviorist Theory

Behaviorist theory, which is more likely a psychological theory, is a theory of native language learning. As a new approach to psychology, it advanced in the United States in the first half of 20th century. It made an emphasis on the importance of verbal behavior, and received a considerable trust from the educational world of 1950s (Demirezen, 1988).

The principle of the behaviorist theory is to understand human behavior as an observable stimulus-response interaction. To connect the behaviorist theory to the field of language studies, I cite Mehmet Demirezen who characterizes behaviorism in the following quotation:

Behaviorism as a psychological theory considers all learning to be establishment of habits as a result of reminiscent of Pavlov's experiment which indicates that stimulus and response work together. According to this category, the babies obtain native language habits via varied babblings which resemble the appropriate words repeated by a person or object near him (Demirezen, 1988, p. 136)

These babblings or mutterings lead to interaction which motivates a baby to repetition. This enforces articulations into grouping of syllables or words under certain conditions. A baby starts to produce sounds and then groups of sounds, made out of various syllables which leads to whole sentences via generalization and analogy. Demirezen mentions examples as in *goed* for *went* or *doed* for *did*. As we see from it, a baby makes errors by articulating in acquired structures of a language. As he sums up:

By the age of five or six, or babblings and mutterings grow into socialized speech but little by little they are internalized as implicit speech, and thus many of their utterances become indistinguishable from the adults. This then, obviously, means that behaviorist theory is a theory of stimulus-response psychology (Demirezen 1988, p. 136)

The point of Behaviorism in connection to language is that a child forms a habit of correct language use. The development of language depends on sufficiency and quality of input as well as on habits in acquisition. Behaviorism is based on the belief that all human behavior is the product of conditioning. Conditioning excludes any consideration of thoughts, feelings, intentions, in short mental processes in general, and is concerned exclusively with observable, mind-external causes of behavior (Block, 2003, p.13). This could be understood in a way that second language is acquired also through imitation.

We could say that when a learner tries to use language and achieves success, he or she is given a positive reinforcement. This works also backwards, when a learner achieves failure. For example, when a learner wants an apple from a table, he tries to ask for it. If he achieves success, a reward is in the form of an apple. If he fails, he has to ask once more and correctly in order to get it. The problem arises while we try to account behaviorism to SLA. The imitative behavior can be observed sometimes, but the language development most probably depends on more features than only repetition. Let me quote Ellis directly again, "Behaviorism cannot adequately account for L2 acquisition. Learners frequently do not produce output that simply reproduces the input. Furthermore, the systematic nature of their errors demonstrates that they are actively involved in constructing their own rules"(Ellis 1997, p. 32).

Nativist Theory

Nativist theory emerged in the 1960s and 1970s. It claims that language learning looks more towards nature rather than correct bringing up. It more focuses on human's capability of learning. The speed of language learning, according to theory, does not depend on circumstances or environment. The capability of language learning is somewhere in human's brain and it serves the purpose of language acquisition. Noam Chomsky is considered to be the father of the theory. The theory emerged as an answer to the behaviorism, claiming opposite opinion. The major principle of the nativists' view of language acquisition is according to Wilkins (1972) as follows: "Everybody learns a language, not because they are subjected to a similar conditioning process, but because they possess an inborn capacity which permits them to acquire a language as a normal Maturational Process" (p. 168). Chomsky claimed in his book *Aspects of theory of syntax* that there are innate prerequisites of language, because a child masters its native language in a very short period of time in spite of complex and abstract rules in it. Chomsky called this Language Acquisition Device (LAD). According to this, human beings are born with this LAD device which makes people capable to speak or to acquire any language code (Demirezen, 1989, p. 153). LAD is described by McNeil (as cited in Brown, 1987) in four innate language properties below:

- (1) The ability to distinguish speech sounds from other sounds in the environment.
- (2) The ability to organize linguistic events into various classes which can later be refined.
- (3) Knowledge that only a certain kind of linguistic system is possible and that other kinds are not.
- (4) The ability to engage in constant evaluation of the developing linguistic system so as the simplest possible system out of the linguistic data is encountered.

(Brown, 1987, p. 20)

Nativist theory answers some unclearness in the behaviorist theory. Children's capability of language acquisition and a reason for a child learning language are explained by LAD hypothesis above. Nevertheless, this theory does not disprove the behaviorist theory and it is important to mention it here. Rod Ellis (1997) sums the theory into four proposals below:

- 1) Only human beings are capable of learning language.
- 2) The human mind is equipped with a faculty for learning language, referred to as Language Acquisition Device. This is separate from the faculties responsible for other kinds of cognitive activity (for example, logical reasoning)
- 3) This faculty is the primary determinant of language acquisition.
- 4) Input is needed, but only to 'trigger' the operation of the language acquisition device. (Ellis, 1997, p. 32)

There is, of course some criticism towards Nativist Theory. Demirezen mentions several counterarguments in his work. At first, it is not possible to acquire language when a child lacks presence of parents or some other input providers. Secondly, a child is making up hypotheses and trying them under different linguistic circumstances, what leads to certain modifications in a language. Learning still contains trial and error scheme. Thirdly, referring to Wilkins (1972), "individual's world view and his cognitive system are naturally controlled and shaped by the verbal systems of all kinds given restrictively to him by society into which he is born into in the process of acquisition of native language. Then it is very difficult to buy the idea that "the social factors have virtually no role at all in learning languages" (pp. 171-172). Next, Demirezen claims that before creating a creative performance, this performance has to be established by repetitions and imitations. The role of this drill is significant in learning vocabulary and structural patterns. As the last counterargument mentioned here, on

the contrary to Chomsky's statement that "behaviorism is at least quite incapable of explaining our ability to learn and use our mother tongue"(Demirezen, 1989, p. 157), is that one's native tongue limits and restricts his view of the world. Behaviorism claims that language is a verbal behavior, learned by doing it. Kids naturally make mistakes when learning both native and second languages (Demirezen, 1989, p. 155-156).

Creative Construction Theory

Creative construction was a developmental phase of SLA which raised in 1970 based on Sharwood Smith's theory. It claims that "L1 and L2 acquisition were similar and were driven by the same subconscious learning mechanisms unaffected by conscious intervention and crosslinguistic influence" (Smith, 1994, p. 197). Researchers as Corder, Nemser and Selinker were interested in the mixture of processes that lay behind the systematic performance of non-native speakers. Creative construction is actually an alternative to the interlanguage approach. This model seems to be more radical than interlanguage and it has to be mentioned that it made a quite decent impact on the field of SLA at that time. This approach describes some of the theories and models. "A model is a way of representing the various aspects of a theory so that the way that theory hangs together to form a coherent explanation is made clear"(Smith, 1994, p. 43). Again, we meet here with an L1 acquisition, which actually always serves as a comparable acquisition model within the SLA research. As the first language learners start to develop their language cognitively, and based mostly on here-and-now principle, their way of a language development is way more difficult. Second language learners have already gone through this process, and so they follow a system based on their knowledge of the world. That is why L2 learners can use their already developed system for acquisition of a new one. We call it a cross-linguistic influence or rather transfer, which I am going to deal with further in the thesis. The major advantage is that learners can start to produce quite complicated utterances as soon as they possess some knowledge of vocabulary consisting just of several lexical items. To quote Smith,

This makes it possible for them to start with fairly complicated utterances once they have a few lexical items in their interlanguage repertoire. They also possess conversational skills which, in principle, they can use or adapt to gain maximum benefit of a small linguistic repertoire (Smith, 1994, p. 46).

Smith hence conveys that in certain conditions, the course of early child language and early L2 interlanguage is strikingly different. To support this, Smith mentions some features

common for a more mature learners. Firstly, the more mature learner has some language system developed already, and so he has the option of using that system as a stepping stone for developing his L2. This goes hand in hand with a fact that mature learners have much bigger knowledge about the world and so they can talk about variety of topics. And so, as I mentioned before, an older learner usually tries to fit in the vocabulary of L2 onto the grammatical system of L1. This of course leads to many mistakes and errors which have to be fixed later. Nevertheless, L2 learners could consider this option as an advantage while learning a language, because of the communicative ability learned while acquiring L1 (Smith, 1994).

Thus creative construction theory means that learners exposed to a language do not learn it just by a repetition of it, but more likely by approximation to the L1 which they already know. Researchers Marina Burt and Heidi Dulay paid attention to the fact that many of the errors produced by learners represent a sign of L1 transfer error. The evidence supporting this theory is that the children who were acquiring their first language made similar or the same errors as the children who were learning second language. Burt and Dulay describe this in following example gathered in Smith's publication:

'he no wanna go'

This was a typical construction produced by a Spanish child learning English: the pre-verbal placement of the negator *no* mirrors that of Spanish but also appears in data collected by Klima and Bellugi and characterized by them as Stage II in the L1 English development of negation, clearly nothing to do with Spanish (Klima and Bellugi, 1966, Dulay and Burt, 1974).

Dulay and Burt collected spoken data from Spanish speaking children learning English in California. They used methods consisting of probing questions or picture sequences designed to find out a level of using some particular grammatical features. The method was called Bilingual Syntax Measure. They found out that the results of their research was quite similar to the results of studies by Brown (1973) or Villers (1973). They found out that L1 interference errors were more common than natural developmental errors (simplification or overgeneralization). They analysed 513 unambiguous errors collected out of 179 speech samples. They classified only 5 percent of it to be attributable to L1 interference, while 87 percent were classified as intralingual. Remaining 8 percent were classified as unique (Smith, 1994).

The main difference which actually moved the interlanguage theory back was that even though learners still produced errors or deviant forms while learning L2, those forms were of L1 acquisition characteristics too much that it seemed possible to simply reject L1 acquisition theories in the research of L2. However, any of the L2 theories must face the comparison between it and L1 acquisition theories. Research made by Dulay and Burt laid the base for further research. One of the researchers was Stephen Krashen who was an early collaborator of them. He formed one of the first theories of SLA called Natural Order. It consists of five hypotheses which are examined below.

Interlanguage

According to information gathered in David Block's publication *The Social Turn in Second Language Acquisition* we can describe interlanguage firstly based on foundations made by Pit Corder. In 1976 Stephen Pit Corder published his seminar paper *The Significance of Learners' Errors*, which appears to be one of the cornerstones in SLA studies. This work proposed that learners' errors are not a proof of incomplete learning, but it should be looked at in a way that errors are here as an indicator of some learner-built system, which shows that learners' L2 development is made systematically, and that they possess some linguistic competence to achieve success. Corder had some revolutionary ideas which prevailed up to present.

At first, Corder introduced a term *inbuilt syllabus* what basically means that learners are not able to acquire structures for which they are not ready yet. In other words, learners will learn in some self-made order, which does not have to correspond with the teacher's. The teacher's syllabus is for learners rather artificial, and that is why they acquire only some parts of it. Secondly, Corder introduced a distinction between *input* and *intake*. Input stands here for what is a learner exposed to, while intake is the part of it, which learner actually acquires. Next term used by Corder is so called *transitional competence* which refers to learner's current knowledge of the language. As a next, fourth key notion is the distinction between errors and mistakes. To directly quote Block : "with the former seen as representative of the learner's present transitional system and the latter seen as a product of performance and hence unsystematic"(Block 2003, p. 17). As this appears quite important for SLA research, I am going in for the errors and mistakes problematic further in the thesis. A fifth Corder's key notion is about *idiolect*. more: "Corder saw the learner's interlanguage system as a variant

somewhere between L1 and the target language, which in contrast to dialect shared by many individuals, is possessed by the individual and the individual only"(Block, 2003, p. 17).

The term interlanguage can be further described according to Rod Ellis' publication *Second Language Acquisition*. He summarizes that:

"The term interlanguage was coined by the American linguist Larry Selinker, in recognition of the fact that L2 learners construct a linguistic system that draws, in part, on the learner's L1 but is also different from it and also from the target language. A learner's interlanguage is, therefore, a unique linguistic system" (Ellis 1997, p. 33).

Furthermore, Ellis describes several other premises about L2 acquisition in connection with interlanguage, which are definitely worth of mentioning here. First of all, learner make up his or her own system for both comprehension and production of a second language. Ellis refers to this phenomena as a *mental grammar* or *interlanguage*. Secondly, learner's grammar is more or less variable in means of being influenced by the input from outside as well as from inside. This can be proved by the research of errors making which, as I mentioned above, will take part further in the thesis. Anyway, according to Ellis, this is the evidence of internal processing in learner's mind. Thirdly and similarly, the learner's grammar is transitional. This means that learners can change their use of language during its development. It is made by adding, replacing or fixing rules learned before. Ellis calls this phenomena *interlanguage continuum*, which is to quote him directly "That is, learners construct of series of mental grammars or interlanguages as they gradually increase the complexity of their L2 knowledge" (Ellis 1997, p. 33). Learners then move from a very simple grammar to more complex constructions. Ellis provides the example of a word *paint* as the basic form of a lexical unit. As the learner's knowledge of language develops, he is able to add other forms like *painting* or *painted*. As a fourth premise, Ellis points out that the systems learners construct may contain variable rules. On the other hand some researchers disagree, claiming that interlanguage systems are homogenous and "the variability reflects the mistakes learners make when they try to use their knowledge to communicate" (Ellis 1997, p. 34). This leads to a discussion if interlanguage is more about competences or performance. Unfortunately, there is no evidence clearly supporting any of those two streams. As a fifth premise to interlanguage, it is important to mention that learners develop variety of *learning strategies*. Ellis also posts that the different errors in language use indicate different learning strategy. For example, if a student repeatedly omits a grammatical feature it means that he or she tries

to simplify the utterance by ignoring it. The reason here might be insufficient preparedness for a rule's usage. As the last premise, Ellis mentions common fossilization of learners' language. A suggestion made by Larry Selinker is that only about five percent of learners are able to develop somewhere very close to a native speaker level of language. Unfortunately, majority of learners stop their development at some point. Then we can also point out a term *backsliding*. This means that a learner goes back to basics and slowly forgets more complex language and starts to fossilize. Interesting fact is, that fossilization or backsliding do not occur in L1 acquisition, but only in L2 acquisition (Ellis, 1997).

The concept of interlanguage proposed by Ellis provides somewhat self-contained view on L2 acquisition. As Ellis compares, it incorporates elements from Nativist theories of linguistics as a notion of LAD in fourth premise, or cognitive theory (learning strategies). Nevertheless, interlanguage concept raises more questions than answering them. Before I will go on with more SLA theories, we should take a look at a computational model of L2 acquisition provided in Ellis's publication.

We can understand the whole concept of interlanguage as a metaphor of how L2 acquisition works. Ellis compares human mind to a computer, which is processing data. First of all, a learner is exposed to an input which is processed in two stages. Learner processes the input both in short-term memory and a part of it in a long-term memory. The pieces of information which are left in a short-term memory are called intake, while the others left in a long-term memory are called knowledge. "The processes responsible for creating intake and L2 knowledge occur within the 'black box' of learner's mind where the learner's interlanguage is constructed. Finally, L2 knowledge is used by the learner to produce spoken and written output" (Ellis 1997, p. 35). Visual representation of this model can be found below:

input → intake → L2 knowledge → output

(Ellis 1997,p. 35)

Psycholinguistic Aspects of Interlanguage

According to Ellis (1997), the definition of psycholinguistic is, "Psycholinguistics is the study of the mental structures and processes involved in the acquisition and use of language"(Ellis, 1997, p. 51). In this section, I discuss elements which influence second language acquisition. Various terms such as L1 transfer, the role of consciousness, and communication strategies are examined.

L1 Transfer

Transfer is basically the way how former gained knowledge of first language influences the acquisition of the second one. In general, we distinguish two types of transfer: positive and negative. We refer to negative transfer when students produce mistakes based on their L1 knowledge. In this case, students often create their own rules of grammar or omit words not fitting in their natural production. On the other hand, learners' L1 can help them with their L2 acquisition. This is referred to as positive transfer. Some vocabulary and grammar may seem similar which influences acquisition positively (Ellis 1997, p. 52).

Other influences that we should take into consideration are avoidance and overuse. Avoidance is a kind of transfer which makes learners to avoid certain types of errors. This happens because of rare use of those structures. Overuse is simply the opposite of it. Students who overuse some phrases or words accordingly to the norms of their mother tongue or cultural way of behavior.

L1 transfer has been taken into consideration since the beginnings of SLA as a field of study. Firstly, behaviorists believed that errors were largely caused by negative transfer (also called interference). To prevent negative influences, creative analysis was created. It was a list of differences between two languages which was used for preparation of teaching materials. This led to two developments of transfer studies. The first, Nativist point of view, claimed that the occurrence of mistakes is insignificant. An empirical research study with Spanish learners led to the statement that less than 5 per cent of errors were caused by negative transfer. On the other hand, the second development, considered transfer preferably as a matter of cognition (cognitive point of view). As Ellis (1997) writes:

Learners do not construct rules in vacuum; rather they work with whatever information is at their disposal. This includes knowledge of their L1. The L1 can be viewed as a kind of input from the inside. According to this view, then, transfer is not interference but a cognitive process. (Ellis, 1997, p. 52)

The main objection to the behaviorist point of view was that errors do not always occur when they are expected, and that native languages don't always lead to difficulties in L2 learning. Learners can consider some structures basic or similar, so they may rather risk using transferred piece of language than trying an unfamiliar construction. What may seem crucial in transfer is the stage of learner's development. The less developed the learner is, the

more transfer errors may occur. By the time of learning, those errors are omitted (Ellis, 1997, p. 51-54).

The Role of Consciousness

As we see, L1 acquirers (children) don't have to put much effort into learning a language, while L2 learners mostly have to. However, L2 learners are also able to pick up language in the same way, thus the role of consciousness is one of the most controversial issues in SLA. This controversy arises from Krashen's distinction of acquired L2 (subconsciously via comprehensible input), and learned L2 (intentional study). As it is mentioned above in the section on Krashen's Natural Approach, these two knowledge systems are independent of each other, and what is learned is not at the same level as what is acquired.

Nevertheless, there are some other distinctions used by other SLA researchers. For example Richard Schmidt (as cited in Ellis, 1997) distinguishes between consciousness as intentional and consciousness as attention (incidental). The former refers to learner's conscious choice to learn a language. The second one is just about being exposed to a language. In any case, conscious attention to the input is crucial for acquiring it. As Rod Ellis writes towards Krashen's theory: "It helps us to see that when Krashen talks about acquisition being incidental and subconscious he has failed to recognize that incidental acquisition might in fact still involve some degree of conscious attention to input"(Ellis, 1987, p. 55). There are different points of view to conscious attention. Schmidt also points out noticing as something language can't be learned without. Still, some other SLA researchers including Krashen disagree with this opinion.

I can't resist to express myself on this topic. From my personal experience, I do not incline to any of these, because they both seem right to me. I believe that noticing and awareness in general help learners to make acquisition more efficient; on the other hand sometimes it happens that a lexical unit a learner does not pay attention to, somehow comes up to mind. Unfortunately, none empirical research has not proved indisputable evidence to any of these yet.

Natural Approach by Stephen D. Krashen

Krashen is one of the many well-known authors examining various issues in SLA. He worked out the theory of Natural Approach, published in the work of the same name in 1983 in contribution with Tracy Terrell. The theory is based on research of Dulay and Burt. This

method is designated mostly for beginners and it is based on monitoring and interpreting manners through which people acquire their mother language. Most attention is paid to communication and practical activities instead of grammar learning.

Krashen and Terrell specify Natural Approach as "traditional approaches to language teaching which are based on the use of language in communicative situations without recourse to the native language, without reference to grammatical analysis, drilling or to a particular theory of grammar." (Krashen, 1987, p. 9) Krashen establishes the theory on five hypotheses explained below.

1. Acquisition-Learning Hypothesis

This hypothesis is perhaps the most fundamental of all the five hypotheses. It basically states that adults have two different and independent ways of developing competence in a second language. It is necessary to distinguish certain differences between acquisition and learning. First of all, acquisition is more related to subconscious process with focus on communication itself. It should always provide understandable utterance, whilst learning is more likely a conscious process focused on rules in target language. As Krashen writes:

Normally acquisition "initiates" our utterances in a second language and is responsible for our fluency. Learning has only one function, and that is a Monitor, or editor. Learning comes into play only to make changes in the form of our utterance, after it has been "produced" by the acquired system (Krashen, 1987, p. 15).

To sum this up, Acquisition is somewhat more important in means of communication. Learning a language provides us only with monitor used to speak properly, regardless the comprehensibility of utterance. As Krashen quotes some language theorists' assumptions, children acquire while adults can only learn. On the other hand, the acquisition-learning hypothesis claims that adults also acquire and the ability to "pick-up" languages does not disappear at puberty. This means that adults can still achieve native-like levels in a second language.

2. Natural Order Hypothesis

This hypothesis claims that each grammatical structure is acquired in predetermined order, which remains unchanged regardless the learning environment or intelligence. In other words, acquirers of a given language tend to acquire certain grammatical structures early, and others later. Brown (1973) reported that children acquiring English as a first language tended to acquire certain grammatical morphemes, or function words, earlier than others. The suitable example can be found below:

The progressive marker *ing* (as in “He is *playing* baseball”.) and the plural marker / s/ (“two dogs”) were among the first morphemes acquired , while the third person singular marker /s/ (“John’s hat”) were typically acquired much later, coming anywhere from six months to one year later (as cited in Krashen, 1987, p. 12) .

Dulay and Burt (1974-1975) reported that children acquiring English as a second language also show a “natural order” for grammatical morphemes, regardless of their first language. The child second language order of acquisition was different from their first language order, but different groups of second language acquirers showed striking similarities. They used so-called SLOPE (The Second Language Oral Production Test) test probing different 20 structures. According to different researchers, this natural order appears only under certain conditions (or rather disappears under certain conditions).

3. The Monitor Hypothesis

The monitor hypothesis is the conscious part responsible for learner’s utterance. The monitor technique is applied only on the parts of grammar which have not been acquired yet. As Krashen puts it, "The monitor hypothesis implies that formal rules, or conscious learning, play only a limited role in second language performance"(Krashen, 1987, p. 16). However, this statement is correct only for some grammatical features. The usage of learned rules takes part mostly in situations under certain conditions: Students have to have enough time to use learned rules properly; students have to have an opportunity to focus more on form than semantic meaning, and that student knows the rule and its usage. To understand the problem of meeting the conditions necessary to produce language with Monitor, I list them below in shortened form gathered from Krashen’s work.

Time is important in order to think about rules for using them effectively. Speech performer needs sufficient time to react and normal conversation usually does not provide enough time to think about grammar. The over-use of rules in conversation can also lead to unpleasant situations, i.e. hesitant style of talking or inattention to what partner is saying.

Focus on form is a condition connected to the time condition. The speaker must think about correctness of his or her utterance while he or she still has to find proper words. Even if we have enough time, we can be involved in what we are saying that we don't attend to how we are saying it.

Know the rule. Even if students usually know some of the rules, they are commonly not capable to remember all the rules they are exposed to. We can also notice a difference between usage of a rule in spoken form and written form. The main reason is that written production meets the conditions of time and focus better. On the other hand we can monitor a kind of "unnatural order". When a student has more time to prepare his production, the use of the Monitor rises.

As Krashen states, "It appears to be the case that unnatural orders are the result of a rise in rank of certain morphemes, the late-acquired, more "learnable" items" (Krashen, 1987, p. 17). The Monitor then helps to use rules that are non-acquired yet. This fact influences the natural order depending on the usage of the Monitor. The use of the Monitor varies across learners. We can distinguish three types of users described below.

Monitor Over-Users are people who try to monitor their speech all the time. They are checking their output constantly focusing on proper use of conscious second language. The result of such a behavior may be often too much self-correction in the utterance and a lack of fluency. Over-use of the Monitor can be caused by grammar-only lessons given to the students with focus on proper use of language with overused error-correction by a teacher. Next, the over-use of the Monitor can be caused by speakers personality, when these persons don't trust their own acquired competence to use language.

Monitor under-users are language users who prefer not to produce language based on rules. This can be influenced both by a lack of learned rules, or just by preference not to follow them. They rely completely on an acquired system. Error correcting is processed by "the feeling that it sounds right".

The optimal Monitor users. These users are actually our pedagogical goal to produce.

Optimal Monitor users could be able to use the Monitor in cases when necessary, without any intervention with fluency or comprehensibility. They are also capable to switch its use us from high attention (e.g. formal speech) to low (e.g. everyday conversation) To quote Krashen directly, “Some optimal users who have not completely acquired their second language, who make small and occasional errors in speech, can use their conscious grammar so successfully that they can often produce the illusion of being native in their writing”(Krashen, 1987, p. 20).

4. The input hypothesis

This is probably the most important hypothesis mentioned in this section.. As Krashen says, “If the monitor hypothesis is correct, that acquisition is central and learning more peripheral, then the goal of our pedagogy should be to encourage acquisition”(Krashen, 1987, p. 20). The description of the hypothesis is as the following: :

If an acquirer is on 'stage 4', how can he progress to 'stage 5'? More generally, how do we move from stage i , where i represents current competence, to $i + 1$, the next level? (Krashen 1987, p. 21)

The Input Hypothesis says that if we want to move on from stage i to stage $i + 1$ we need to understand i perfectly. Basically, we could say that to acquire something, we need to understand features of a language which are a little further beyond our current level. This is possible, because we understand context, general knowledge of the world and all the other extra-linguistic information. The Input hypothesis also claims, that we don't learn structures first. We develop fluency by practice in communication, but on the contrary we first try to understand meaning of utterance followed by acquisition of structure.

5. The Affective Filter Hypothesis

The Affective Filter hypothesis refers to factors influencing SLA process. It was first proposed by Dulay and Burt (1977), which confirmed that a variety of affective variables relate to success in second language acquisition. "The Affective Filter hypothesis states how affective factors relate to the second language acquisition process" (Krashen 1987, p. 30) Krashen understands acquirers' emotional state as a variable filter, which can let the input go through, limit it, or block it totally. This filter influences amount and quality of information

acquirer perceive as well as ability to use it for production. The Affective Filter consists mainly of three following categories, quoted directly from Krashen:

- (1) Motivation. Performers with high motivation generally do better in second language acquisition (usually, but not always, "integrative").
 - (2) Self-confidence. Performers with self-confidence and a good self-image tend to do better in second language acquisition
 - (3) Anxiety. Low anxiety appears to be conducive to second language acquisition, whether measured as personal or classroom anxiety
- (Krashen 1987, p. 31)

The stronger the filter is, the more difficult is the acquisition. The learners whose attitudes are not towards second language acquisition will usually tend to seek less input and also their Affective Filter will become stronger. The result is, that "even if they understand the message, the input will not reach that part of brain responsible for language acquisition." (Krashen 1987, p. 31). This also works vice-versa, when acquirer is willing to acquire a language, he or she will try to find more input and it will also influence him more.

Teachers should provide classes which encourage students to acquire. The stronger is the Filter, the more difficult the acquisition becomes. Teachers should then try to make Affective Filter as low as possible. Providing good input and keeping Filter low seem to be the most important things in theories about second language acquisition. "The effective language teacher is someone who can provide input and help make it comprehensible in a low anxiety situation." (Krashen 1987, p. 32)

According to previous description of this theory, I can sum it up as following. As I see it, the theory states that there are more factors influencing acquisition of target language. It is an affective filter which is responsible for our motivation and attitude towards language learning in different situations. It is similar with monitor use. People use monitor differently, and our goal as a teachers is to train so called optimal monitor users. Nevertheless, the input provided to students seems to be most important factor while acquiring a language. The input should be dosed slightly beyond students' knowledge in order to learn something new.

III. METHODS

This chapter describes the research methods. It contains the description of how the research was made, including the description of the questionnaire used, information about participants and process. The point of this research is to identify students' beliefs about principles of SLA, and their awareness of certain SLA features. The Questionnaire part focuses on construction of the form the respondents were asked to fill in, the Participants section includes general information about the respondents, and Process part deals with the way of evaluation of the filled questionnaires.

Questionnaire

For this research, I asked 45 students of different sex, age and time of learning English. The questionnaire contained 27 statements based on SLA theories presented in the Theoretical part. The respondents were asked to express their level of agreement responsibly, but in a short time period of no more than 15 minutes. It has to be mentioned that the questionnaire was distributed in Czech language for better orientation in subject matter. Statements were answered using the scale of 1-4 according the following legend: 1 Strongly agree, 2 Agree, 3 Disagree, 4 Strongly disagree. The statements were mixed up in order to avoid repetition. Before assigning the questionnaire to the students, I asked several uninitiated people to fill in, in order to adjust all the statements to be comprehensible. Some of the questions are clearly opposite to the theories examined in Theoretical Part. Those statements are following: 6, 10, 13, 14, 17, 25. The result of this research should investigate the respondents' awareness of certain SLA features important for learning a language. The questionnaire is to be found attached in Apendix.

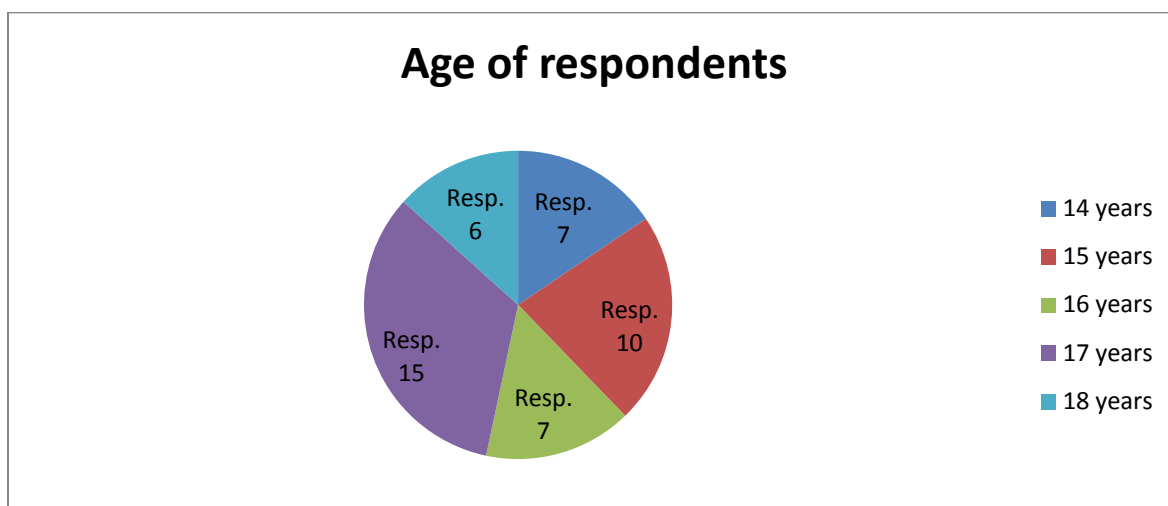
Table 1 shows which statements in the questionnaire stands for which theory of SLA. This table serves for better orientation. Nevertheless, some of the statements presented in the questionnaire may be intertwined with more than only one theory.

	Statement number									
Behaviorist Theory	1	18	27							
Nativist Theory	2	8	10							
Creative Construction	7	20	23	26						
Natural Approach	3	4	6	9	11	15	16	22	24	25
Interlanguage	12	14	17	19						
Psycholinguistic Aspects	5	13	21							

Table 1. Distribution of the statements according to SLA hypotheses

Participants

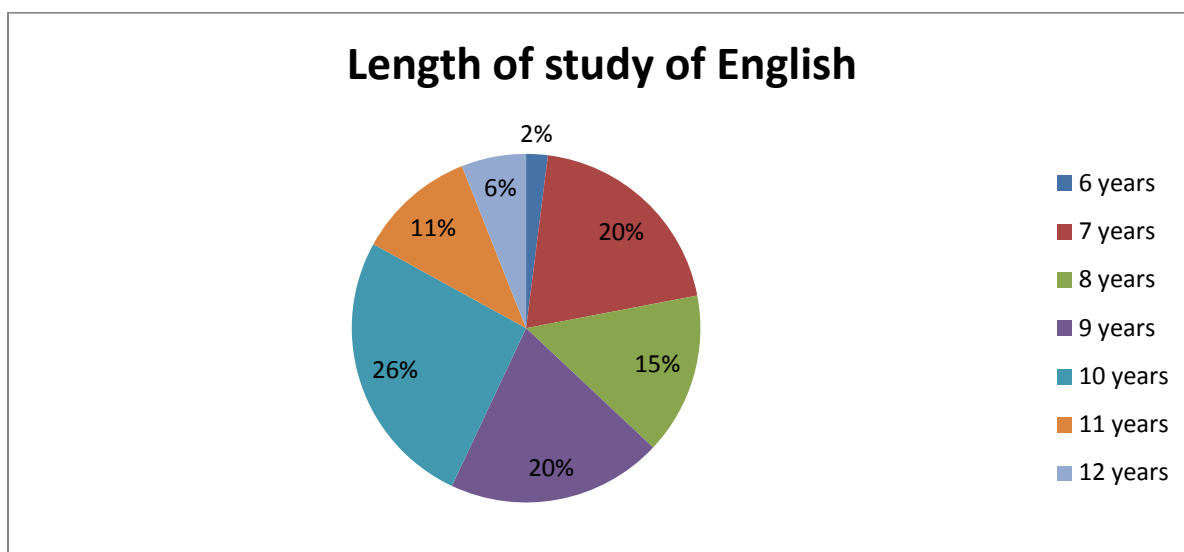
My research deals with attitude towards SLA amongst Czech grammar school students. The respondents were aged between fourteen to eighteen years. The average age of the respondents was 16 years of age. For further itemization, see Graph 1.



Graph 1. Age of respondents

Out of 45 respondents who participated in the research, males were represented by 26 respondents and women by 19 respondents. Participants were also asked, how long have they

been studying English. The time of study is between 6 years to 12 years. The following Graph 2 shows the respondents' length of study in percentage.



Graph 2. Length of study of English

The average length of English study of the respondents is **8 years**. I chose classes with more experience of learning a language intentionally. More experienced learners are more capable of considering statements' truthfulness due to time spent acquiring their second language.

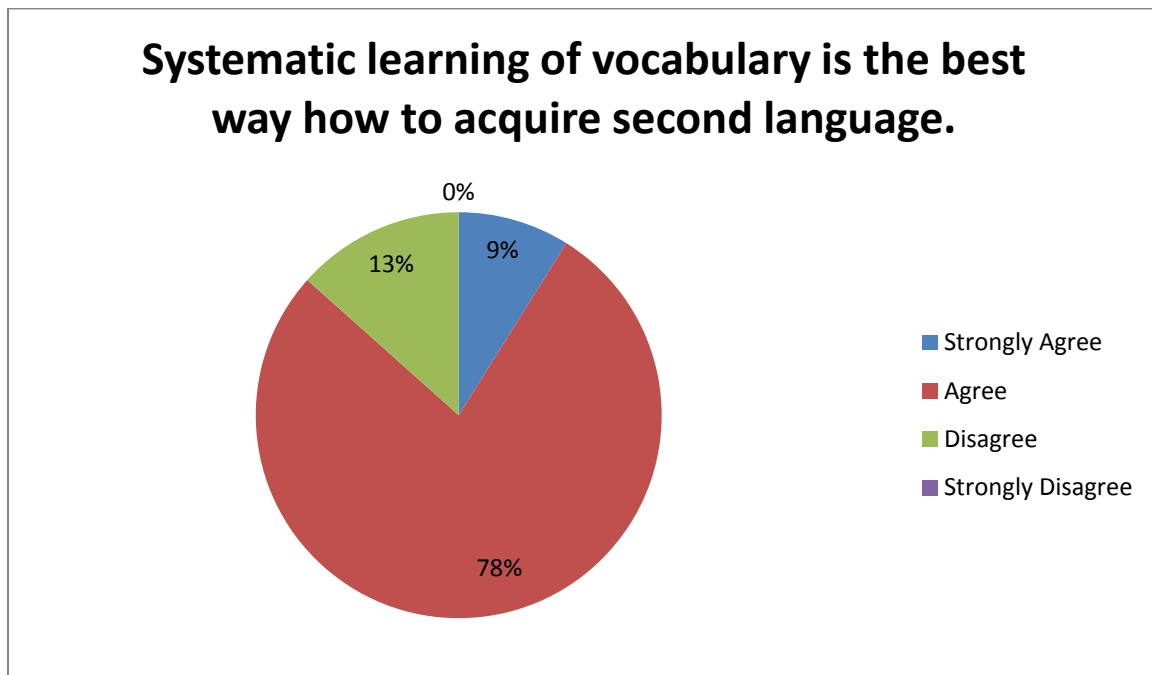
Process

The questionnaire was distributed at Gymnázium Františka Křížíka in Pilsen, March 2014. The questionnaire was processed using pie graphs followed by a comment on the particular graphs. I used arithmetical mean for overall evaluation of the level of awareness of SLA statements, based on agreement and disagreement ratio. The result of the overall evaluation is to be found at the end of Results and Commentaries chapter.

IV. RESULTS AND COMMENTARIES

In the following section, individual statements presented through the questionnaire are discussed, showing graphs based on the respondents' answers. I comment on each of the statements, and point out some of the surprising findings as well as expected results. As it is mentioned above, the questionnaire contained 27 statements and each one was based on a particular SLA theory. I examine how grammar school students' points of view differ from reputable authors, and what they find more (or less) important when acquiring a second language. The final result is to be found at the very end of this chapter.

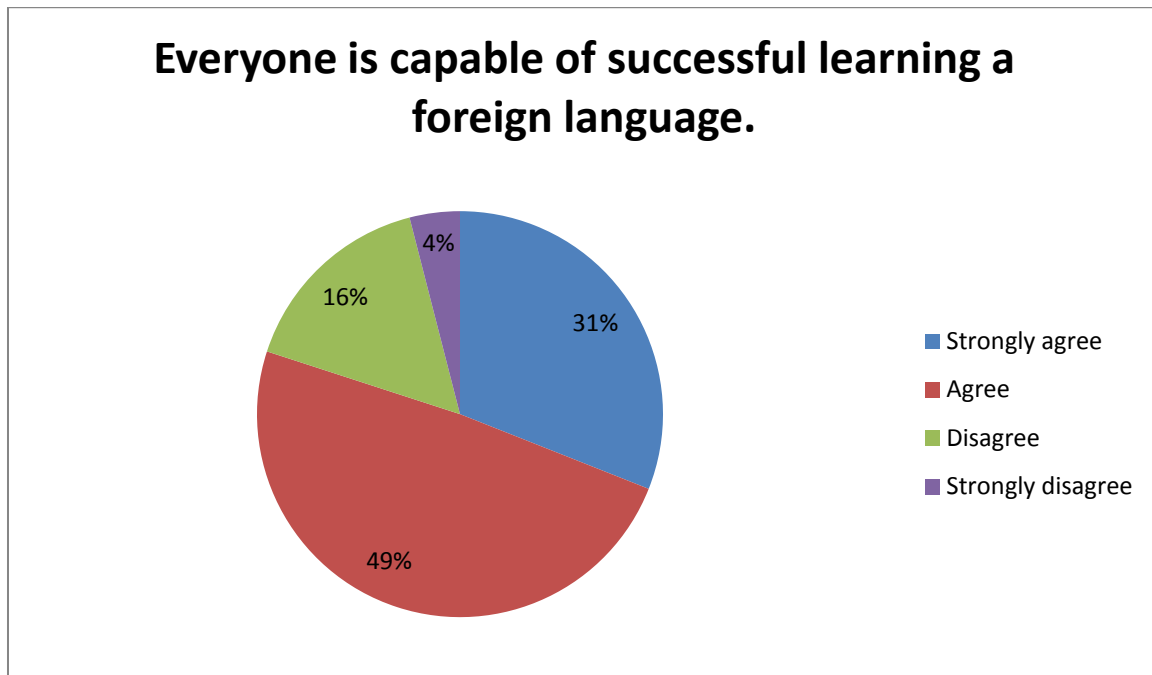
Statement # 1: Systematic learning of vocabulary is the best way how to acquire second language.



Graph 3. Systematic learning of vocabulary is the best way how to acquire second language

This statement comes from the Behaviorist Theory. The respondents were expected to agree with this statement. We can see that according to the students, vocabulary takes a very important part in learning language. Only 9% of the respondents strongly agree with this statement. We can assume that the rest considers vocabulary very important, but not the best way of acquiring language. The fact that 0% of strong disagreements appeared, definitely supports the statement.

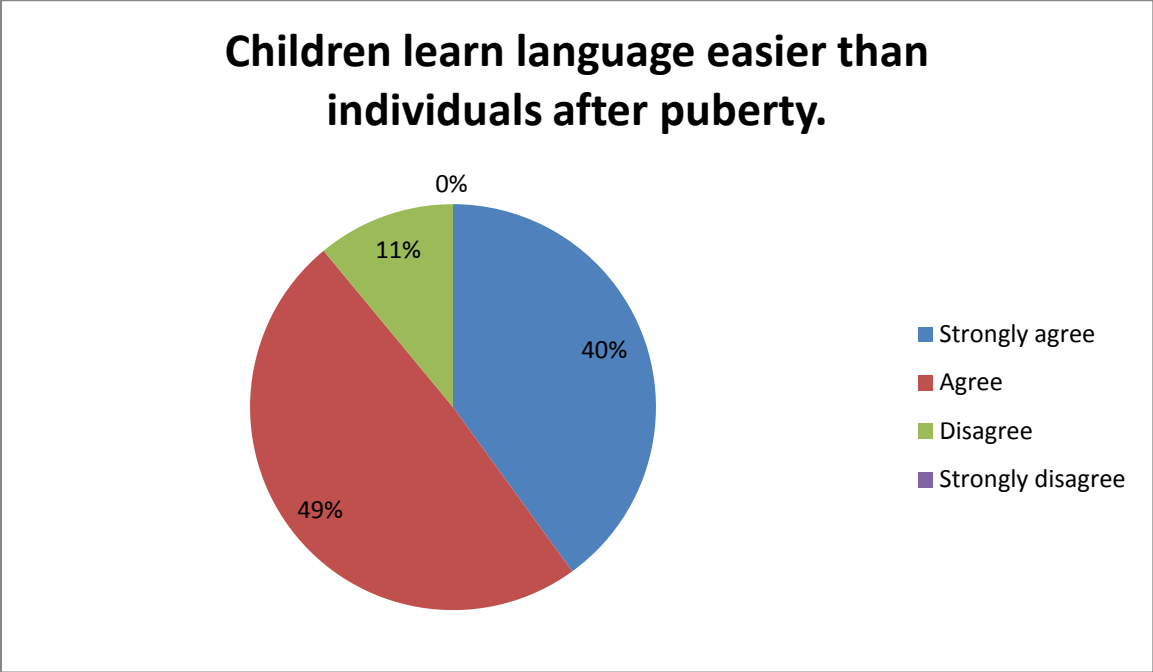
Statement # 2: Everyone is capable of successful learning a foreign language.



Graph 4. Everyone is capable of successful learning a foreign language

The respondents mostly answered here with agreement with the Nativist Theory (80%). Based on this response, we can assume that most of the asked students think that something such as Language Acquisition Device exists. On the other hand, 20% of negative responses may indicate the respondents' experience with someone who has not mastered any second language at any level. The question remains if those people were really incapable, or if there were any other reasons for their failure (e.g. the lack of motivation).

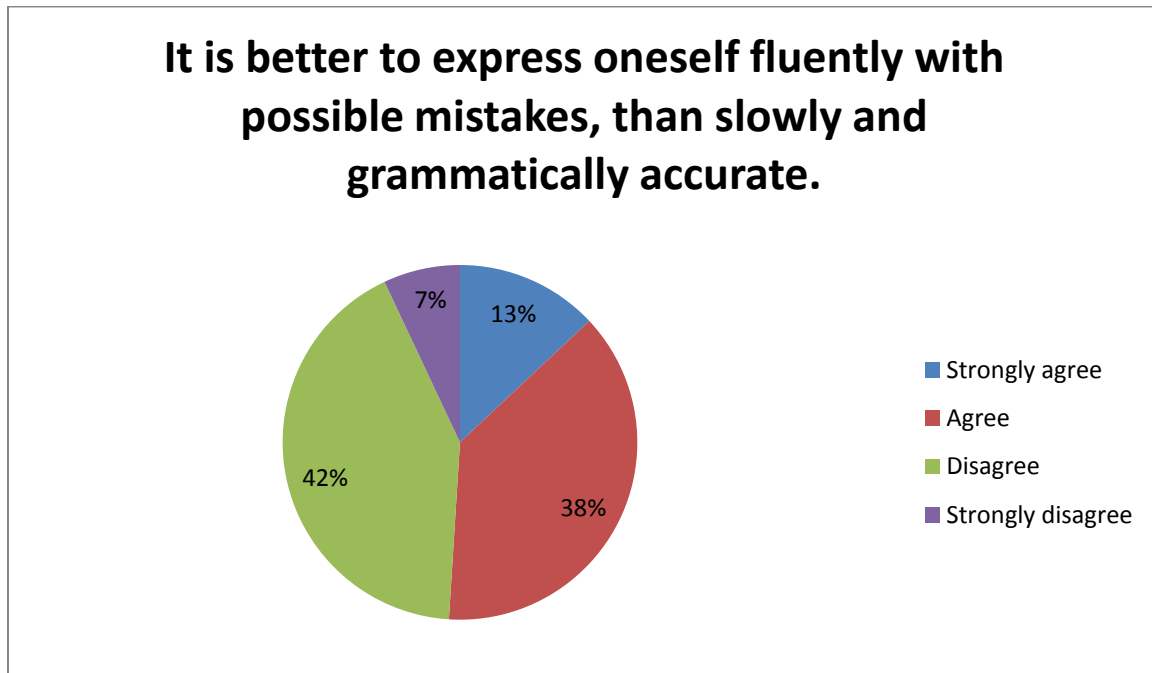
Statement # 3: Children learn language easier than individuals after puberty.



Graph 5. Children learn language easier than individuals after puberty

The respondents overwhelmingly agreed with this statement which is based on the Natural Approach. The result indicates that there is truly a difference between learning of children and adults. The majority believes that children are capable of learning a language with less effort, if any.

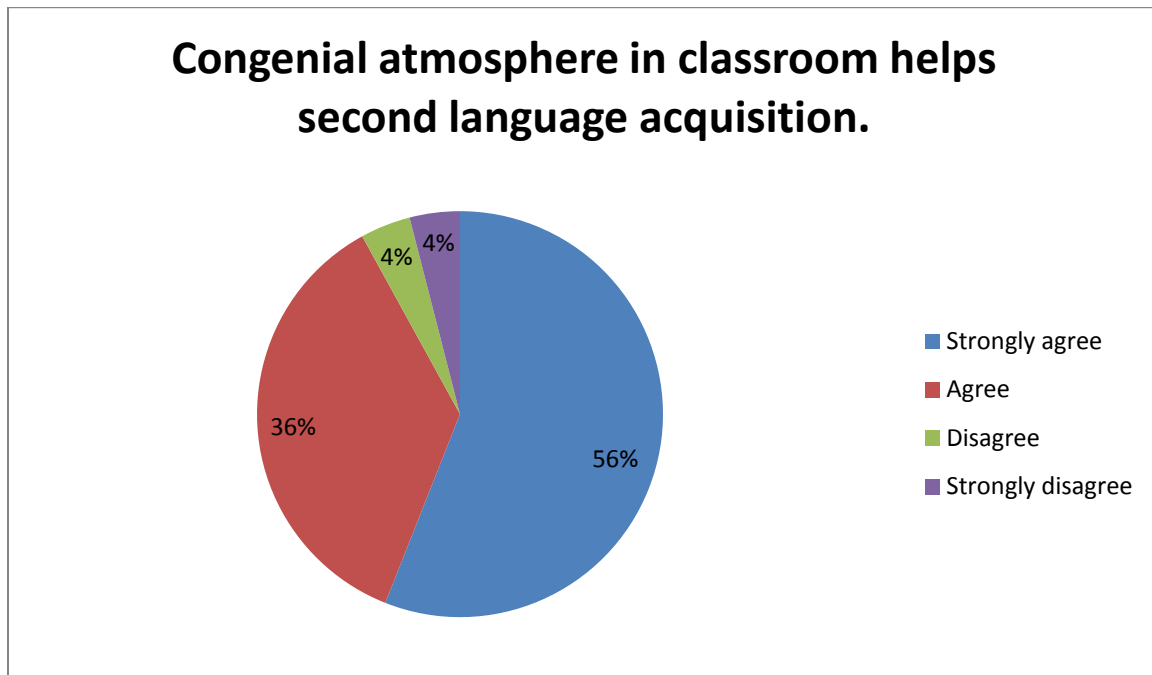
Statement # 4: It is better to express oneself fluently with possible mistakes, than slowly and grammatically accurate.



Graph 6. It is better to express oneself fluently with possible mistakes, than slowly and grammatically accurate

The respondents got into disagreement with this statement. We can see that the percentage ratio is 51% for disagreement and 49% for agreement. It probably accounts for different preferences of second language learners. The result met the expectation, and so I am not able to state if speaking fluently is more important than being grammatically accurate. The results show that an ideal speed/accuracy ratio is somewhere in between, which supports The Monitor Hypothesis.

Statement # 5: Congenial atmosphere in classroom helps second language acquisition.



Graph 7. Congenial atmosphere in classroom helps second language acquisition

As expected, the respondents mostly agreed with this statement (92%). It supports the Affective Filter Hypothesis, and we can see that students find it easier to acquire any input in a classroom when the climate is encouraging.

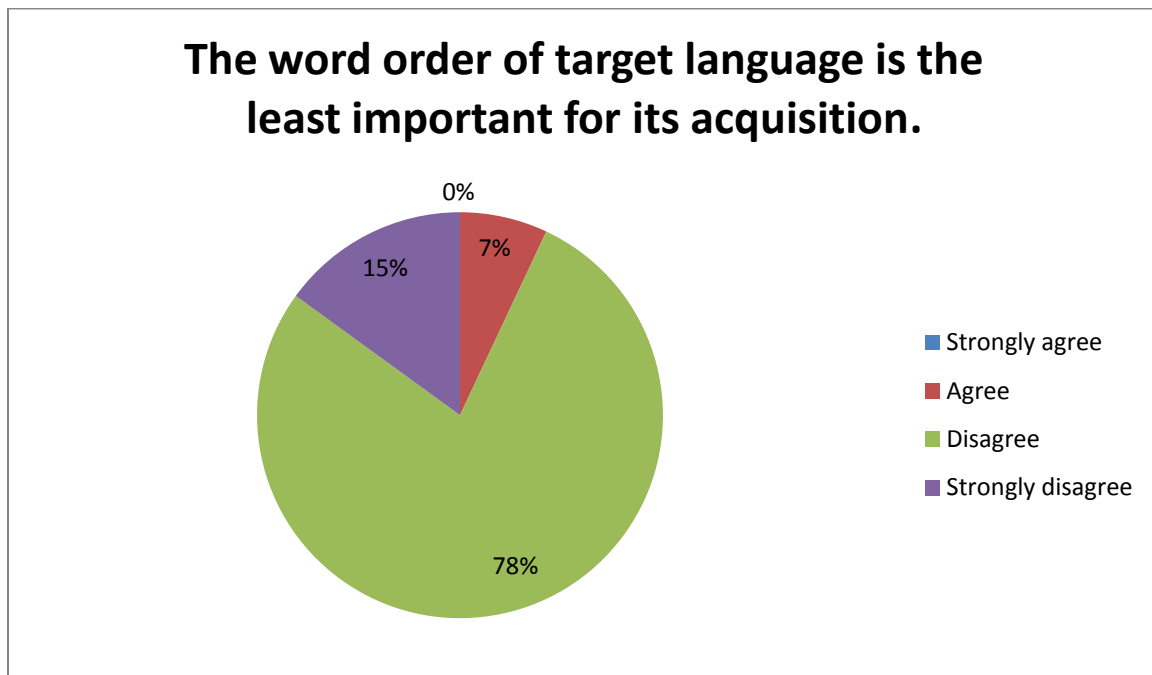
Statement # 6: Listening exercise is the best, when a listener understands almost completely.



Graph 8. Listening exercise is the best, when a listener understands almost completely

This statement is based on the Input Hypothesis. It states that being exposed to input slightly beyond learners' knowledge is the best way to successfully acquire second language. It was expected of students to rather disagree with the statement. Nonetheless, only 31% of the respondents disagreed with the statement. According to the result, I assume that 61% of the respondents prefer comprehensible listening exercises due to practice.

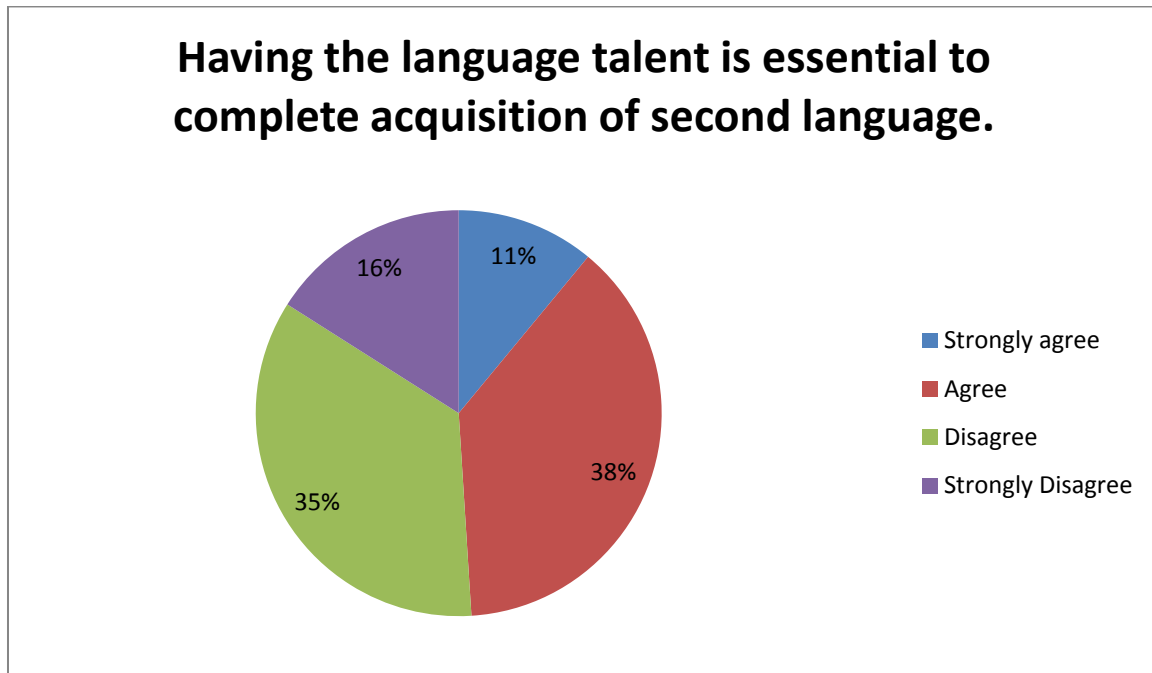
Statement # 7: The word order of target language is the least important for its acquisition



Graph 9. The word order of target language is the least important for its acquisition

This statement is connected with the Creative Construction Theory. The theory states that learners tend to maintain the word order of their first language. The result (the 93% of negative responses) shows the respondents' awareness of importance of learning the correct word order of the target language. The respondents are aware of the negative transfer.

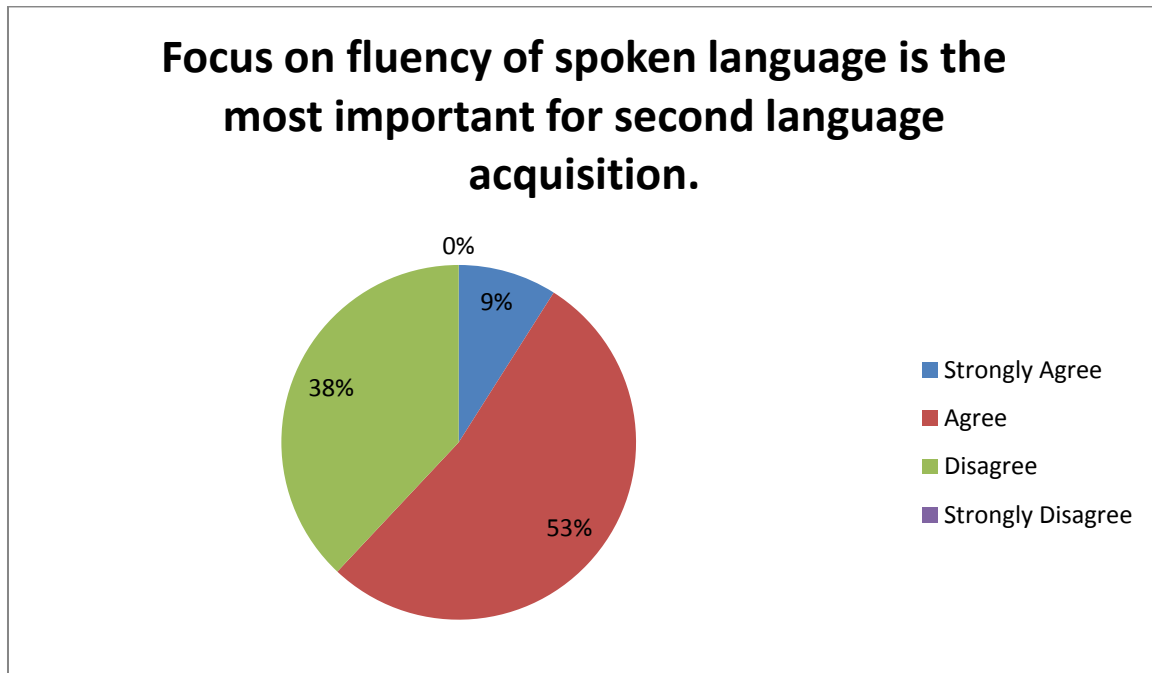
Statement # 8: Having the language talent is essential to complete acquisition of second language.



Graph 10. Having the language talent is essential to complete acquisition of second language

This statement is based on the Nativist Theory. It is interesting how the result is different from Statement 2, even if it has a very similar basis. Of course, Statement 2 investigated successful learning, while Statement 8 investigated complete acquisition. It is interesting that only 49% of the respondents think that talent is essential to complete acquisition, while 80% of the respondents think that everyone is capable of successful learning. Talent may be important only for approximately a half of the sample. The respondents here answered in complete contradiction.

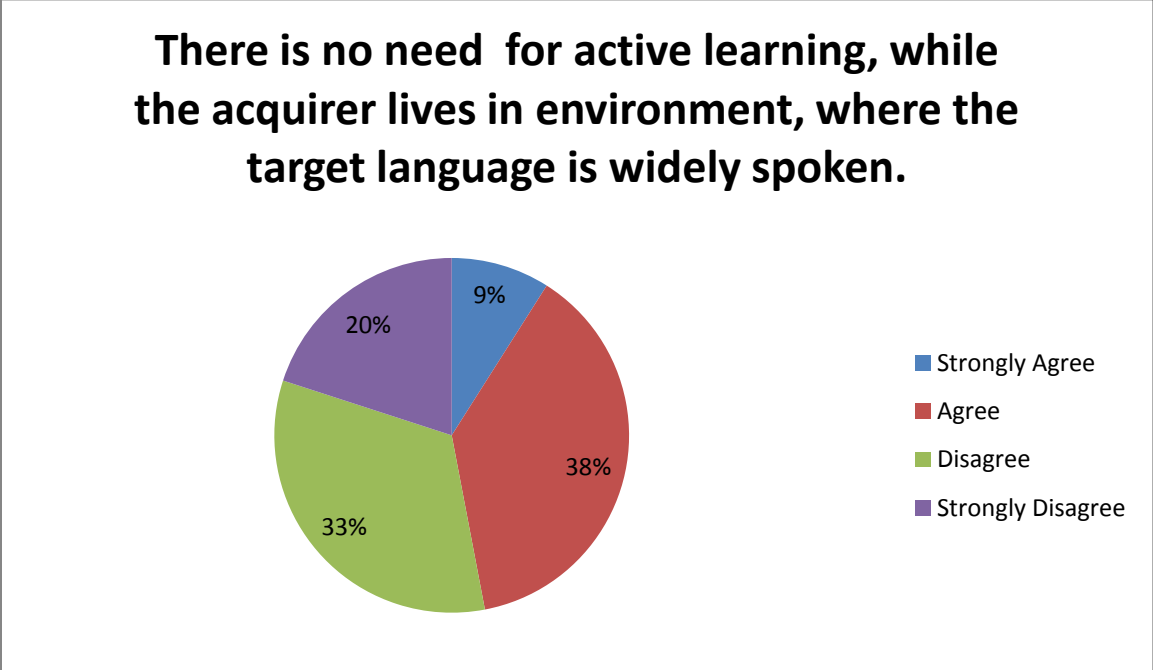
Statement # 9: Focus on fluency of spoken language is the most important for second language acquisition.



Graph 11. Focus on fluency of spoken language is the most important for second language acquisition

This statement is similar to Statement 4. However, a majority of the respondents (62%) agreed with the importance of fluency. No strong disagreement appeared, thus we can consider fluency important for most of the learners, but not the most important.

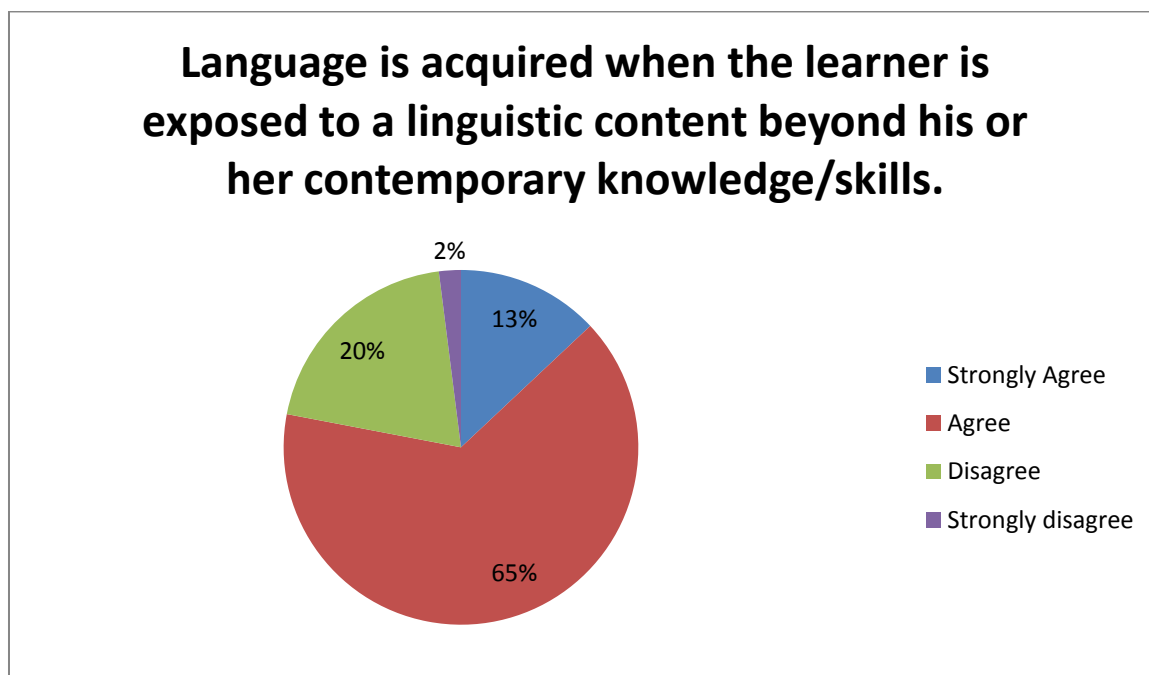
Statement # 10: There is no need for active learning, while the acquirer lives in environment, where the target language is widely spoken.



Graph 12. There is no need for active learning, while the acquirer lives in environment, where the target language is widely spoken

The result of this statement did not meet the expectation. The result was expected somewhere beyond 70% of negative responses. The fact that 38% of the respondents think that learners are able to acquire target language effortlessly, and another 9% of the respondents even strongly agree with it, supports the Nativist Theory and its Language Acquisition Device. However, another 53% of the respondents disagree, so I cannot clearly declare if the students agree with the Nativist Theory.

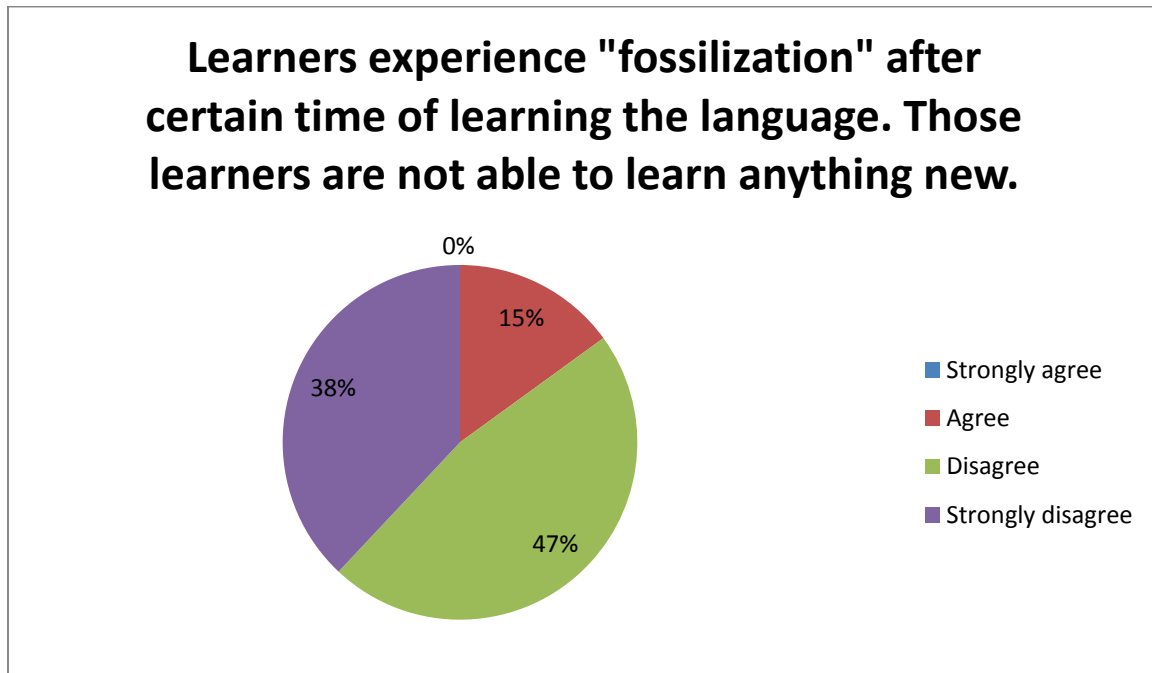
Statement # 11: Language is acquired when the learner is exposed to a linguistic content beyond his or her contemporary knowledge/skills.



Graph 13. Language is acquired when the learner is exposed to a linguistic content beyond his or her contemporary knowledge/skills

The result of this questionnaire statement supports Krashen's Input Hypothesis. A total of 78% of positive answers shows that the input $i+1$ seems important to the grammar school students. The comparison with statement 6 is interesting. The respondents there mostly agreed that comprehensible input is one of the key factors in language acquisition.. Surprisingly, the result differs here. I suppose this statement may seem clearer to the respondents.

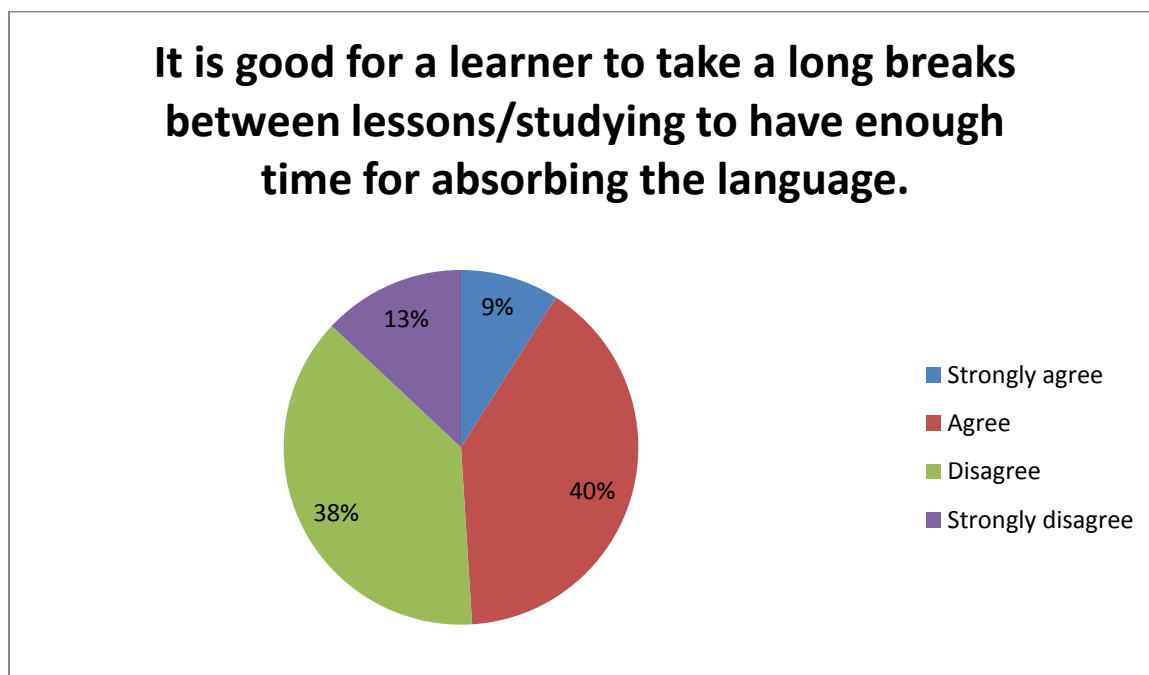
Statement # 12: Learners experience "fossilization" after certain time of learning the language. Those learners are not able to learn anything new.



Graph 14. Learners experience "fossilization" after certain time of learning the language. Those learners are not able to learn anything new

The result here is quite shocking. We can see that grammar school students do not think that fossilization really happens. Only 15% of the respondents answered positively, while 85% did not agree with the statement. It is interesting to see, how respondents do not agree with some of the theories of reputable authors.

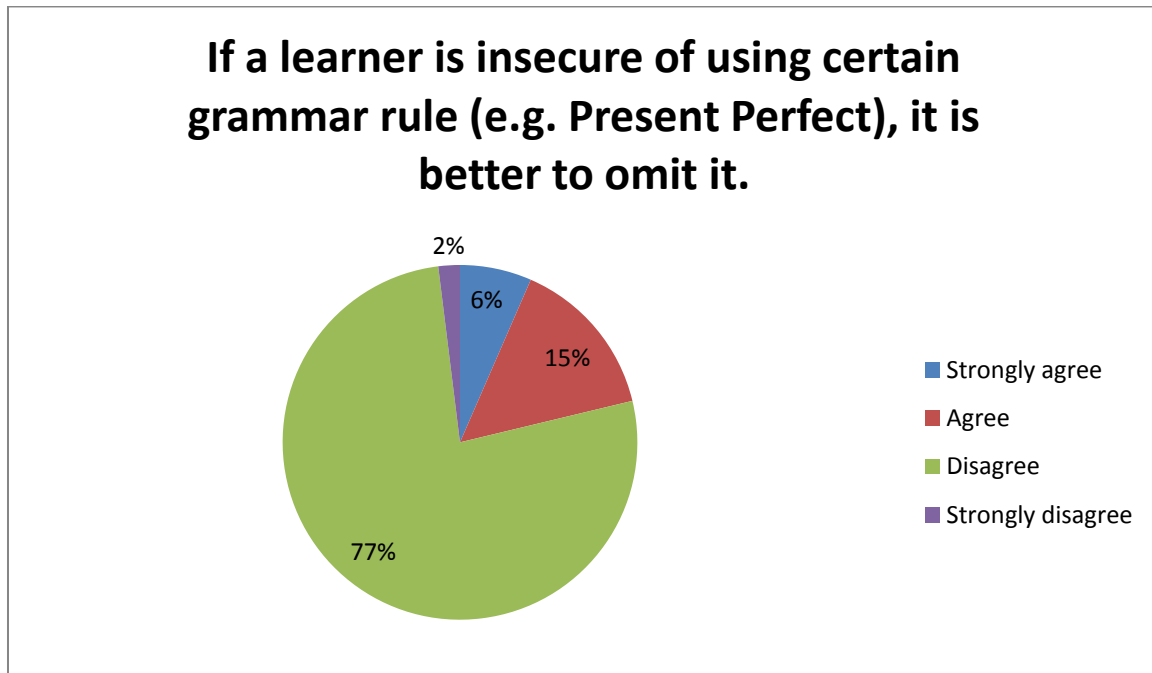
Statement # 13: It is good for a learner to take a long breaks between lessons/studying to have enough time for absorbing the language.



Graph 15. It is good for a learner to take a long breaks between lessons/studying to have enough time for absorbing the language

Here again, the expectation was not met. The result I expected based on the theoretical part was rather a disagreement. This statement comes from the Psycholinguistic Aspects of SLA, but it is put inverse. According to the theory, frequent exposition to a language is essential. The respondents answered with difference in opinion (49% of agreements and 51% of disagreements). It is interesting to see, that the result is very similar to Statement 8 (49% of general agreement), where the respondents disagreed with the importance of a language talent.

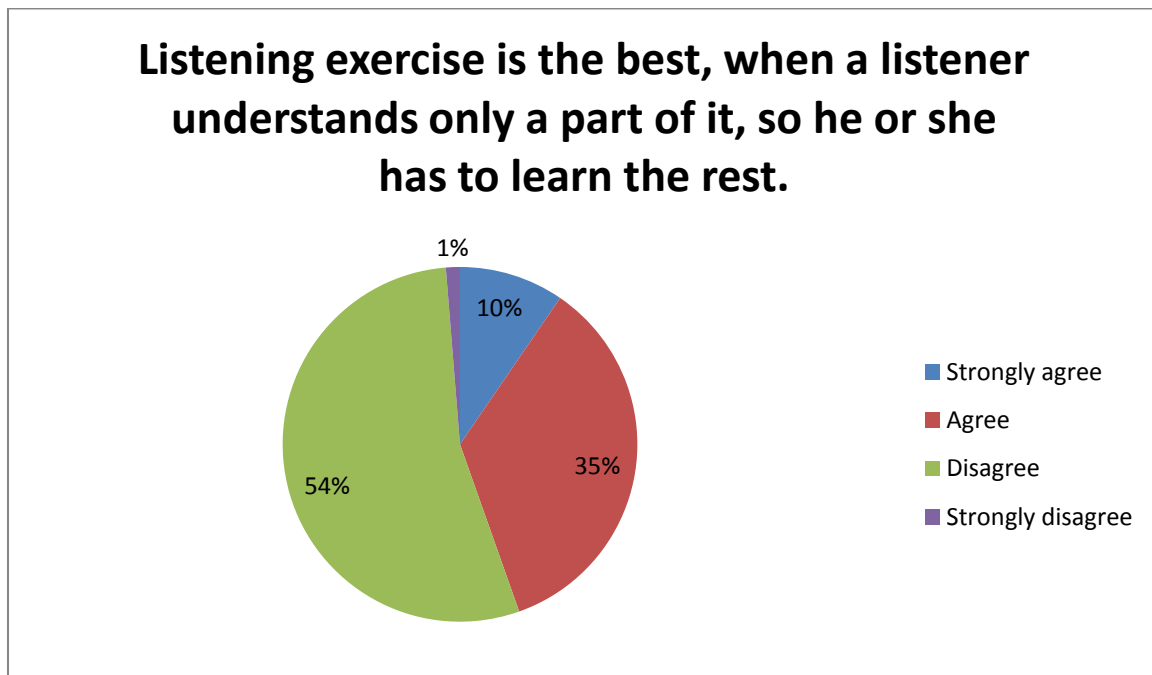
Statement # 14: If a learner is insecure of using certain grammar rule (e.g. Present Perfect), it is better to omit it.



Graph 16. If a learner is insecure of using certain grammar rule (e.g. Present Perfect), it is better to omit it

This statement met the expectation. Most of the respondents (79%) do not agree with omitting grammar rules due to insecurity. On the other hand, the other 21% of the respondents think that omitting the rules is not a problem. It is interesting how the respondents could not agree with statement 4, while the result is quite clear here.

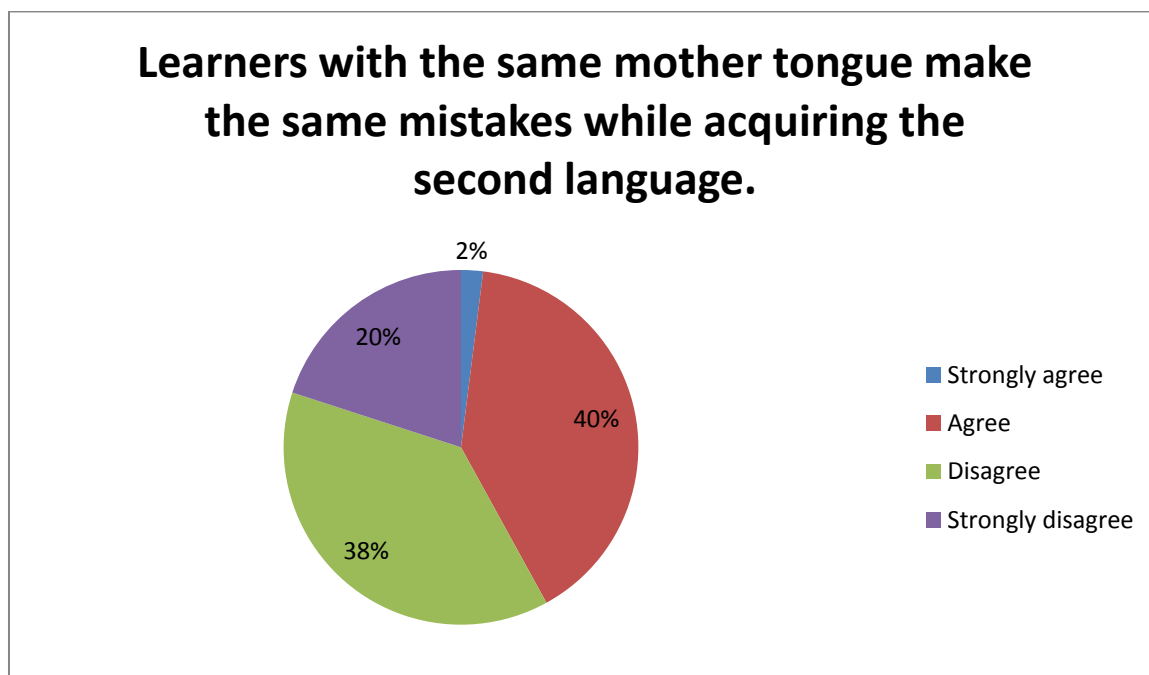
Statement # 15: Listening exercise is the best, when a listener understands only a part of it, so he or she has to learn the rest.



Graph 17. Listening exercise is the best, when a listener understands only a part of it, so he or she has to learn the rest

This statement is in direct contrast with Statements 6 and 11, and so the expected result was opposite and similar respectively. However, the results slightly differ. Here again, the result does not precisely support the Input Hypothesis, because the result is in ratio of 55% of agreement and 45% of disagreement in general. I am not able to state clearly if the respondents agree with the Input hypothesis, which is the basis for this statement.

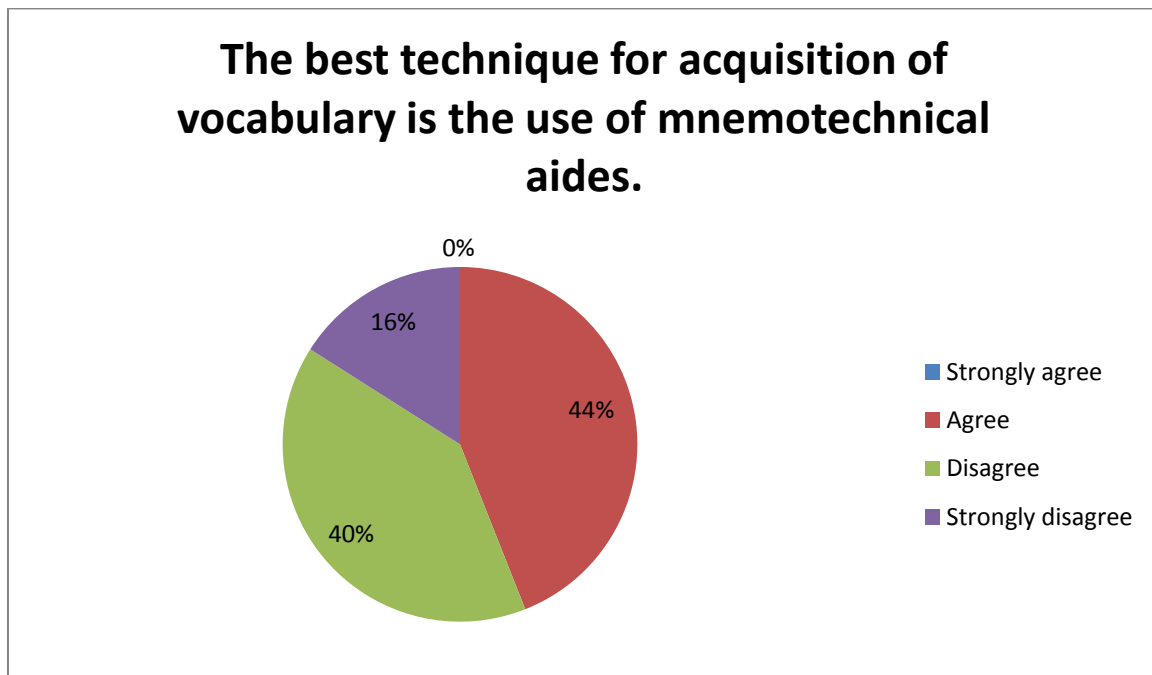
Statement # 16: Learners with the same mother tongue make the same mistakes while acquiring the second language.



Graph 18. Learners with the same mother tongue make the same mistakes while acquiring the second language

The majority of the respondents (58%) disagree with this statement. It is interesting that even 20% of the respondents expressed their strong disagreement rather than simply disagreement. It may refer to their experience within the classroom, and comparison between each other. It indicates that the respondents are aware of certain differences among themselves. According to the theoretical part, I expected different beliefs among the students. This statement is based on research made by Dulay and Burt, who proved this one as a fact. On the other hand, this research deals rather with an attitude than with particular features of language learning.

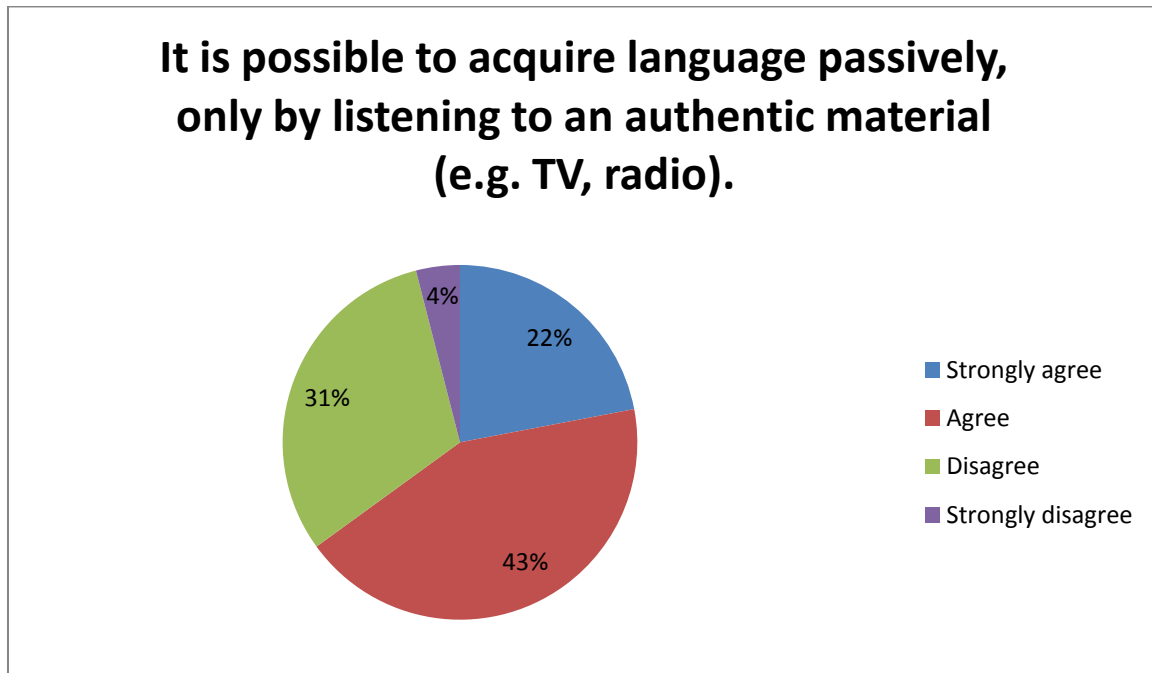
Statement # 17: The best technique for acquisition of vocabulary is the use of mnemotechnical aides.



Graph 19. The best technique for acquisition of vocabulary is the use of mnemotechnical aides

The lack of strong agreement indicates that mnemotechnical aides are certainly not the best way to learn English. Nonetheless, some of the students still find it useful, which is represented by 44% of positive responses. This result meets the expectation of divergence in attitudes towards the use of mnemotechnical aides. Based on 56% of negative responses (16% of strong disagreement), I can assume the common attitude towards this statements is rather a disagreement.

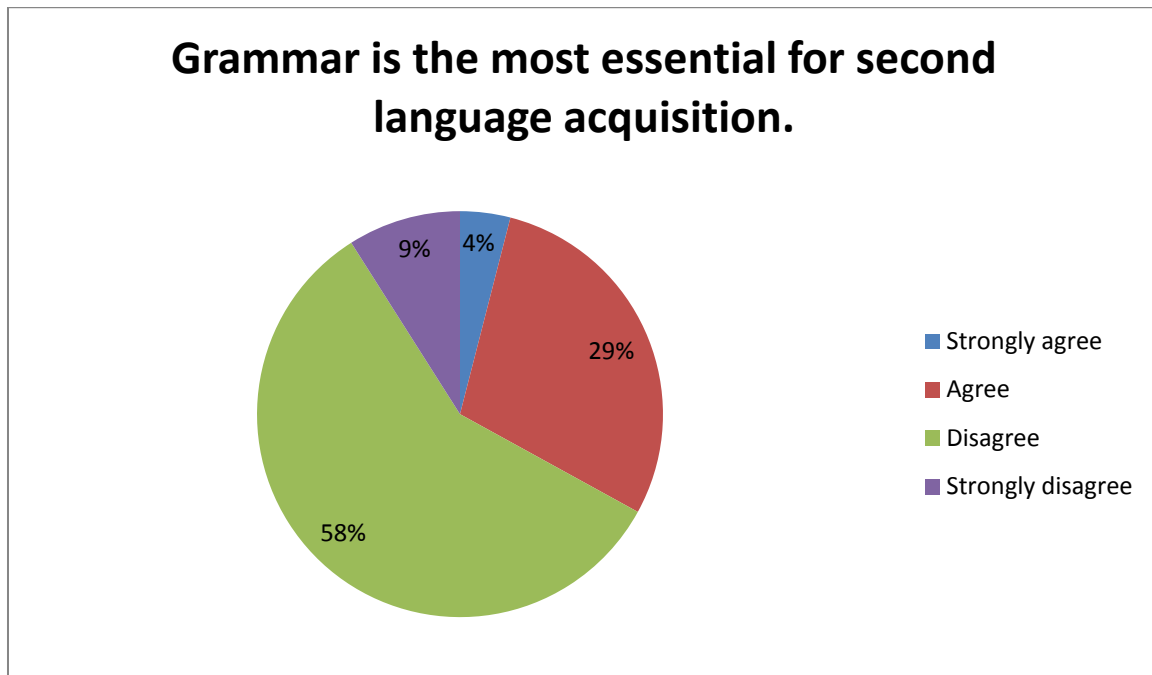
Statement # 18: It is possible to acquire language passively, only by listening to an authentic material (e.g. TV, radio)



Graph 20. It is possible to acquire language passively, only by listening to an authentic material

Surprisingly, 65% of the respondents agreed with this statement, while the others 35% disagreed. It can be assigned to different learning strategies of the students. The result shows that the majority of the respondents actually think language can be acquired passively. The result is interesting, because it shows us the students' attitude towards the Behaviorist Theory, which is more negative than positive.

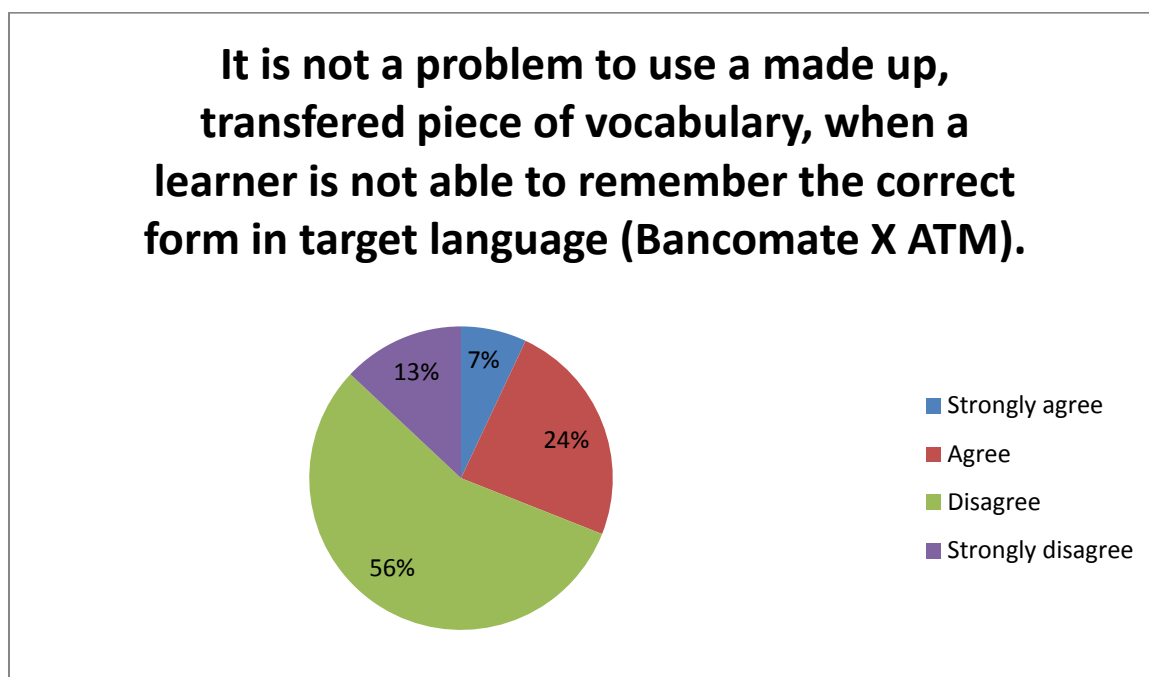
Statement # 19: Grammar is the most essential for second language acquisition.



Graph 21. Grammar is the most essential for second language acquisition

The result is not anything unexpected. Grammar is not very popular among students, so they do not consider it very important. Only 33% of the respondents answered positively, while 67% answered negatively. It indicates that students of high school consider grammar not very important.

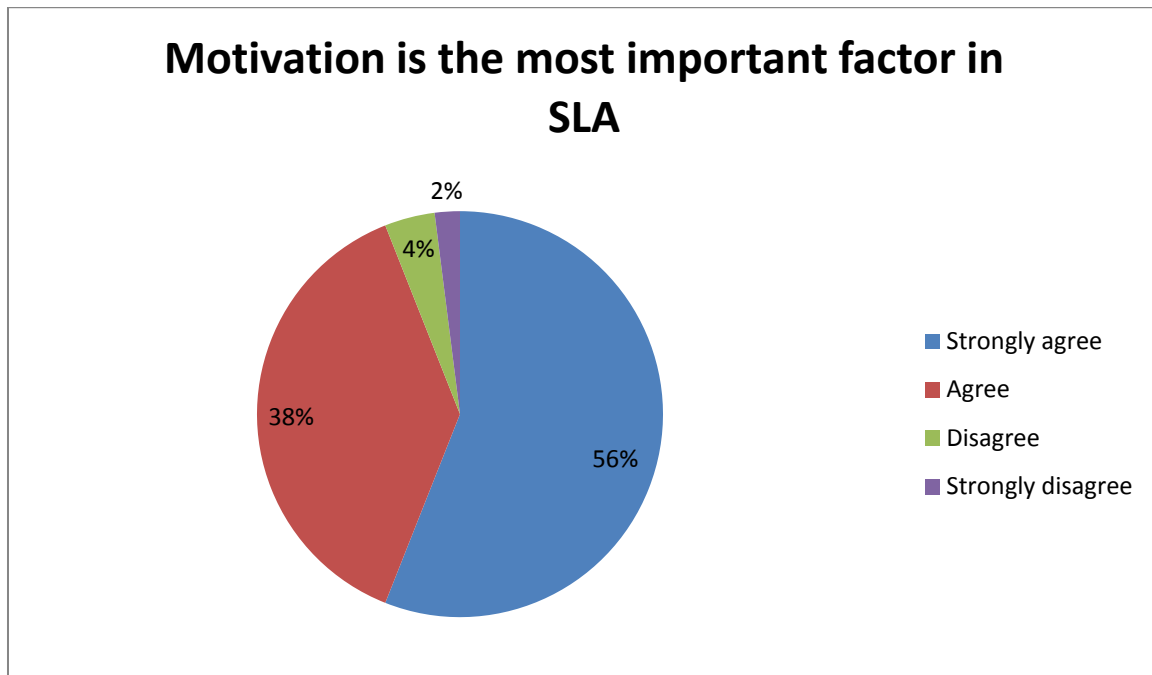
Statement # 20: It is not a problem to use a made up, transfered piece of vocabulary, when a learner is not able to remember the correct form in target language (Bancomate X ATM).



Graph 22. It is not a problem to use a made up, transfered piece of vocabulary, when a learner is not able to remember the correct form in target language (Bancomate X ATM)

As expected, the respondents mostly disagree with this statement (69%). Most probably, they are aware of possible fatal misunderstandings caused by using made up vocabulary. On the other hand, it can be sometimes helpful to try a made up word rather than nothing. It is what probably the minority of 31% of the respondents think.

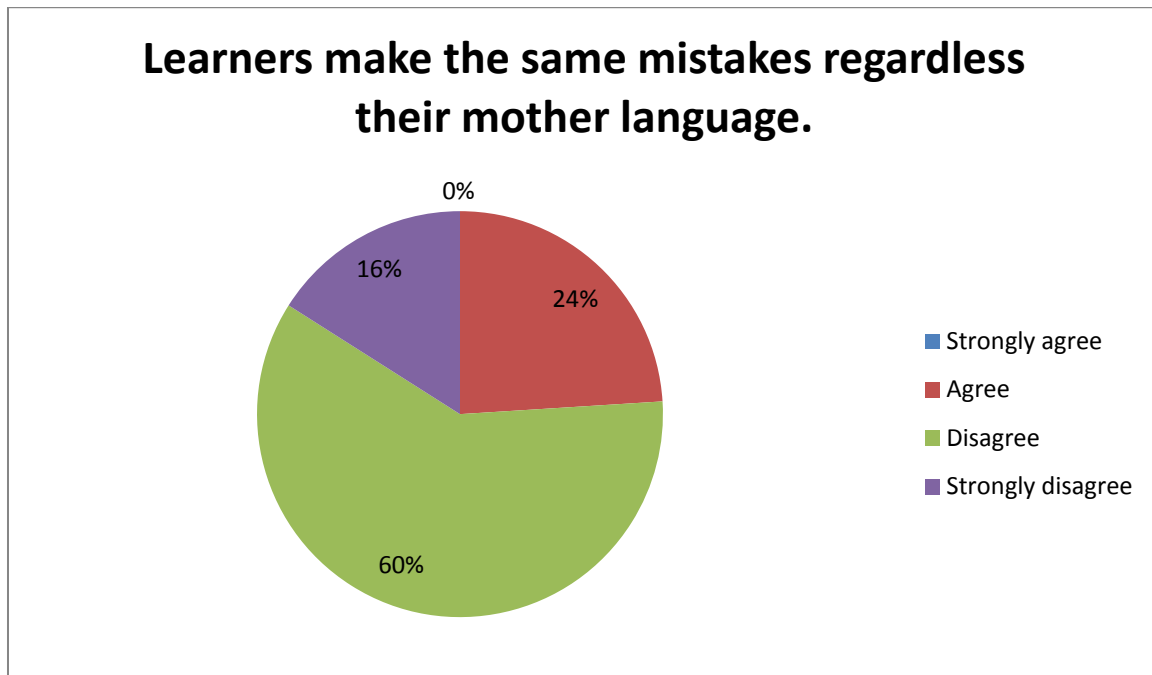
Statement # 21: Motivation is the most important factor in SLA



Graph 23. Motivation is the most important factor in SLA

Out of 45 respondents, only 1 strongly disagreed, and 2 disagreed. An overwhelming majority of 42 respondents (94%) agreed with the statement. It is an anticipated result, and it definitely means the students understand that motivation is crucial element in second language acquisition.

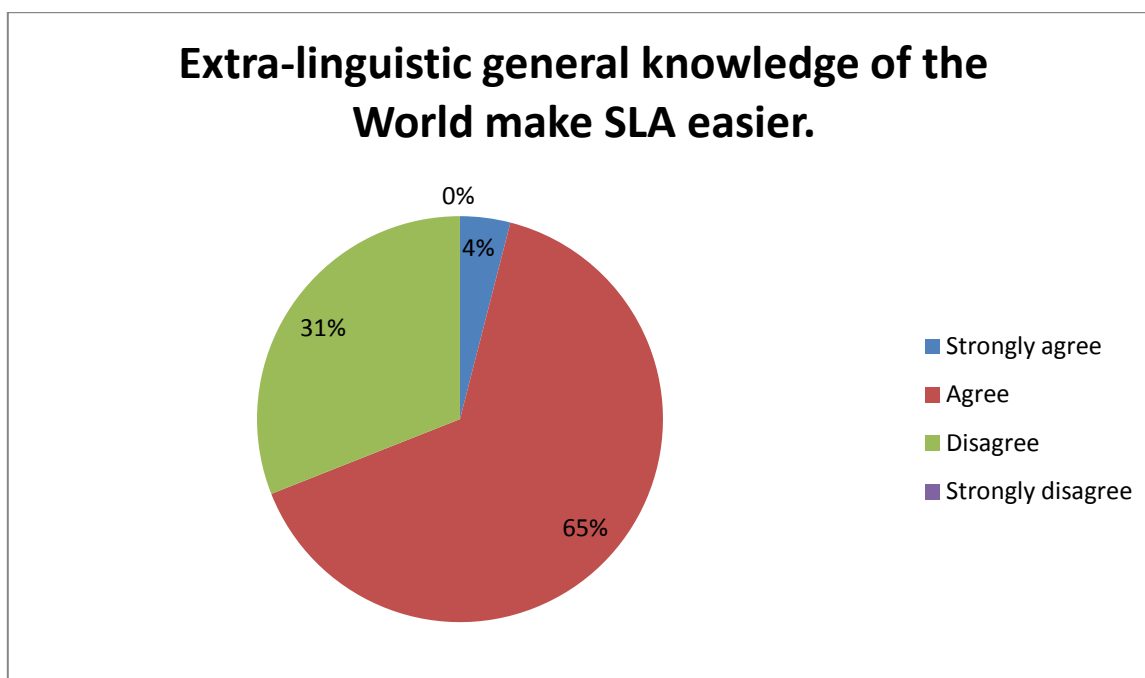
Statement # 22: Learners make the same mistakes regardless their mother language.



Graph 24. Learners make the same mistakes regardless their mother language

The respondents did not agree with this statement based on Dulay and Burt's research (1994) again, as in Statement 16. Thus the result is, that grammar school's students did not agree with this part of the Natural Order Hypothesis. A majority of the students disagreed (76%), only 24% agreed, but no one expressed strong agreement with the statement. Unfortunately, the students might disagreed, due to impossibility of comparison between the students in local conditions (Czech Republic).

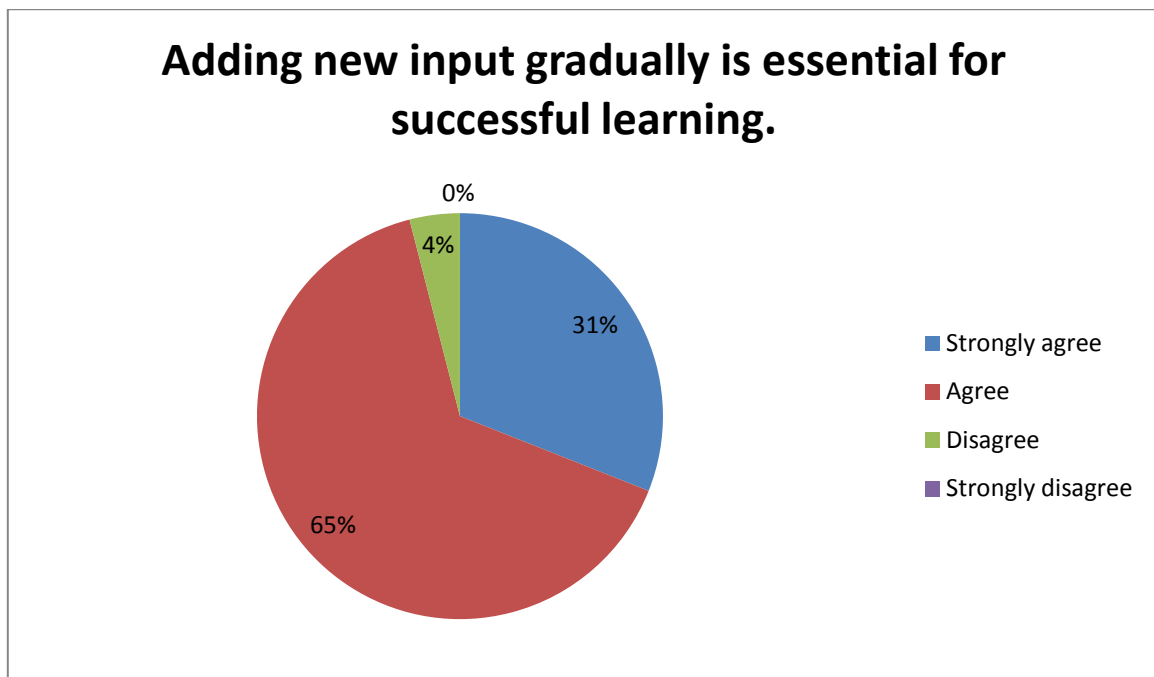
Statement # 23: Extra-linguistic general knowledge of the World make SLA easier.



Graph 25. Extra-linguistic general knowledge of the World make SLA easier

Even though 31% of the respondents answered negatively, the others (69%) agree with the statement that general knowledge of the World helps with language learning. I believe that the negative respondents did not realize the importance of extra-linguistic general knowledge (e.g. it is easier to learn a word *conference* when a learner heard of it in his or her mother language, while a very young learner might have no idea of what the *conference* is). However, the fact that positive answer predominate indicates that the respondents found this statement important

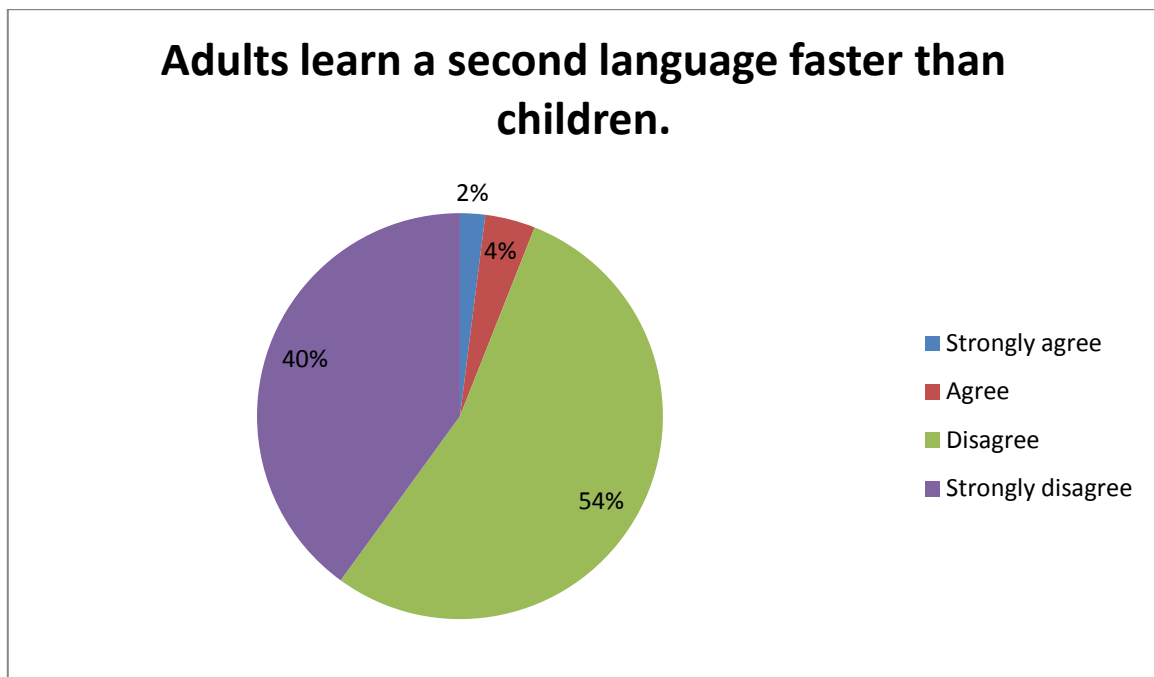
Statement # 24: Adding new input gradually is essential for successful learning.



Graph 26. Adding new input gradually is essential for successful learning

This statement has almost lack of disagreement (only 4%). On the other side, 96% of the respondents more or less agreed with it. This is definitely one of the clearest results in this research. The respondents usually did not agree with many things, but it seems that they did with the Input Hypothesis (Statements 6, 11 and 15).

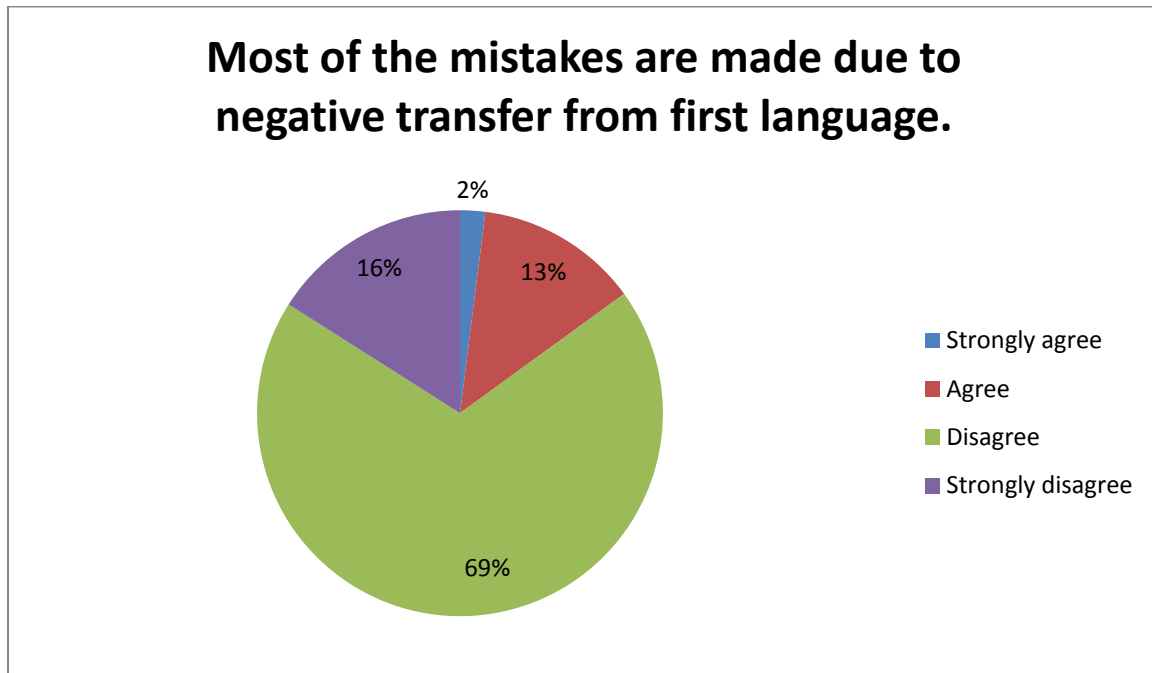
Statement # 25: Adults learn a second language faster than children.



Graph 27. Adults learn a second language faster than children

A majority of 94% respondents disagreed with this one, while only 6% did. This statement also received an almost unite answer in both Statement 3 and 25. It supports the Acquisition-Learning Hypothesis, and the fact that children are better learners than adults.

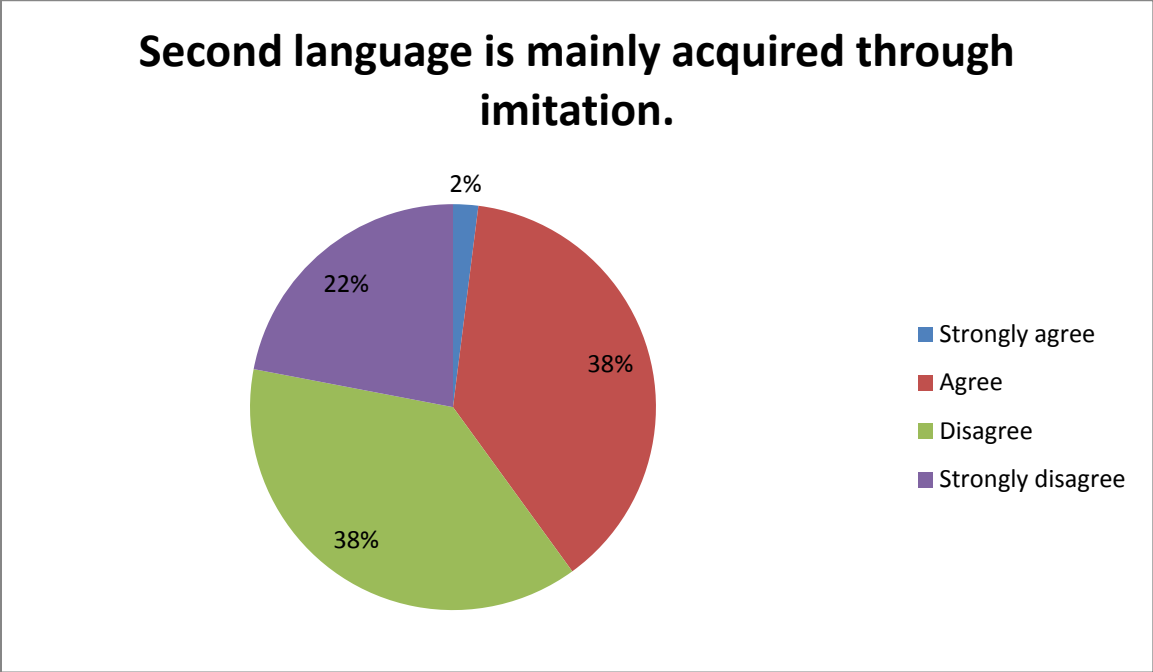
Statement # 26: Most of the mistakes are made due to negative transfer from first language.



Graph 28. Most of the mistakes are made due to negative transfer from first language

The expected result here was rather negative, but it is surprising that no fewer than 15% of students answered positively. Nevertheless, another 85% disagreed with this statement. Now I can assume, the students think that not a majority of mistakes is caused by negative transfer, but those mistakes are not purely insignificant (this is what 1 respondent thought). This result alongside with the one from Statement 20, makes me determine this part of the Creative Construction Theory as not very important for the sample of grammar school students.

Statement # 27: Second language is mainly acquired through imitation



Graph 29. Second language is mainly acquired through imitation

This statement is directly connected with the whole concept of Behaviorism. Basically, the respondents do not fully agree with this theory, at least not with one voice. The relation of answers is 40% of agreements and 60% of disagreements. It means that some of the students think imitation is the way of acquiring language, but the other part does not. We can see 22% of strong disagreement, while only 2% of strong agreement, and so it seems the students are not highly aware of the Behaviorist Theory. Similar disagreement can be seen in Statement 18, which also comes from Behaviorist Theory.

Final result

In this very last section of Results and Commentaries, I make the final judgment about the students' awareness of SLA theories, which are considered as unimportant to them, and which are actually important for the acquisition of the target language. Table 2 shows the ratio of answered statements according to this legend: Green = the respondents answered in agreement with the theory, which signalizes their awareness of aspects of a particular SLA approach, Blue = the respondents answered neither in agreement, nor in disagreement with a particular SLA approach, Red = the respondents answered rather in disagreement with a particular SLA approach. The result is considered as an Agreement or Disagreement when at least 60% of the students inclined to one of these poles.

	Statement number									
Behaviorist Theory	1	18	27							
Nativist Theory	2	8	10							
Creative Construction	7	20	23	26						
Natural Approach	3	4	6	9	11	15	16	22	24	25
Interlanguage	12	14	17	19						
Psycholinguistic Aspects	5	13	21							

Table 2. Classification of answered statement

The awareness of SLA theories is calculated based on arithmetic mean, according to following legend: Green = 10 points, Blue = 5 point, Red = 0 points. The results are labeled as Agreement, when a final result has score of 6 and more, as Variance when a final result has score between 4,1 to 5,9, and as Disagreement when a final result has score of 4 or lower. The final result is to be found in *Table 3*.

According to the Table 3. below, I can clearly distinguish the respondents' awareness of the SLA theories. I comment on the results and make the final statements in the following bullet points. The points are commented further in the Implications part.

	Score	Final result
Behaviorist Theory	3,3	Disagreement
Nativist Theory	6,6	Agreement
Creative Construction	2,5	Disagreement
Natural Approach	6	Agreement
Interlanguage	3,7	Disagreement
Psycholinguistic Aspects	8,3	Agreement

Table 3. Score and Final Result

Behaviorist Theory: The respondents agreed on only one feature of Behaviorism, which is an importance of systematic learning of vocabulary. They basically disagreed with both other features as active learning and imitation.

Nativist Theory: The students basically agreed with the Nativist Theory. But on the other hand, they answered in variance to the importance of language talent and influence of environment, where the target language is widely spoken. Nonetheless, they mostly agreed that everyone is capable of learning a foreign language, which means that they are actually aware of something such as Language Acquisition Device

Creative Construction: The respondents essentially disagreed with the influence of negative transfer on the SLA (statements 7, 20, 26). However, they agreed with the Statement 23 (Extra-linguistic general knowledge of the World make SLA easier). The awareness of either negative and positive transfer proved as somewhat insufficient.

Natural Approach: The students generally agreed with the Natural Approach. They proved awareness of a difference in speed of learning between adult and child speed of language learning as well as with the Input Hypothesis. However, the Input Hypothesis was answered positively only when the statement was put directly (Statements 11 and 24), and

answered negatively or in disagreement, when the meaning was rather hidden in the statements (Statements 6 and 15). The students rather disagreed with influence of the Monitor on their utterance.

Interlanguage: The results show here rather respondents' unawareness of the Interlanguage Theory. The respondents did not agree with Statements 12 and 19, agreed with Statement 14, and reached disagreement in opinion with Statement 17.

Psycholinguistic Aspects: We can of predominance in positive answers and almost complete lack of disagreements. It shows that the respondents are generally aware of some of the Psycholinguistic Aspects, such as environment or motivation, but on the other hand, they did not reach the agreement in the question of drill.

The Results and Commentaries chapter shows that the respondents answered in variance towards different SLA theories. The theories that resulted positively are following: Nativist Theory, Natural Approach, and Psycholinguistic Aspects. On the other side, the theories that resulted negatively are following: Behaviorist Theory, Creative Construction, and Interlanguage.

V. IMPLICATIONS

This chapter contains implication of the research into teaching practice, limitation of the research and suggestions for further research. In the Implications for Teaching part, I comment on each SLA theory, based on research as well as on personal experience. I also suggest some ideas that might be useful for language teachers in order to increase the awareness of SLA among students, and so improve students' language acquisition. The Limitation of the Research briefly describes the weaknesses of the research, and Suggestion for Further Research describes my vision of continuation with the research.

Implications for Teaching

In this part, based on the research, I present some ideas that might be applicable for other teachers in their practice. The result of the research showed that students follow/are aware of some of the SLA theories, when put in practice. On the other hand, there are still some that should be presented to the students in a more popular way, in order to improve their language acquisition. First of all, I comment on the theories, which resulted positively, so the students think of them as contributing to their SLA. Out of the result of the Nativist Theory statements, we can see that the students are already conscious about the ability of learning a language by almost anyone. This is a good thing, and we should encourage learners in this belief. It might increase the motivation of some of them, which is definitely one of our primary goals as language teachers. The problem might appear with the learners' belief of passive acquisition, and language talent. The learners should not think that they are capable of learning a foreign language fluently just by passive listening to it. I think, based on the result, we should encourage students to communication more, because there is no doubt that passive acquisition may improve a listener's ability to comprehend, but it does not improve his ability to express himself. It is a very similar situation with the question of language talent. The students must not fall into persuasion, that if they are not those with language talent, they should give up learning the language. Let us then provide the students with appropriate opportunities for self-expression in various speaking activities.

The Natural Approach had the positive response as well. The students were well informed about the difference in language acquisition between certain stages of life. It is probably a good thing, thus we can apply this fact as motivation for younger students in classes, by telling them that this is the best time for them to learn a language. The fact that

most of the students admitted the importance of the Input Hypothesis is also a very good finding. However, there was still an echo of disagreement amongst the respondents. It is of course necessary to add a new input, because if there was no new input, there would be nothing to learn. Some of the students preferred repetition and drill to application of an input slightly further beyond their language skill. I think this is a very crucial moment for a teacher to find this clash in his classroom. It is more or less up to him, because slowing down the progress might harm some students, while it would help t others. This is maybe why the respondents were in doubt, and I think that teachers should assign a placement test more often than it is done now at Czech schools. The only think that was answered rather with disagreement about the Natural Approach was the function of the Monitor. Students basically preferred to focus on their fluency rather than grammar. I think teachers should take this into consideration, but on the other side students should accept the fact that they cannot improve with fluency without mastering at least some of the grammatical rules.

The Psycholinguistic Aspects was the part of the questionnaire where the respondents agreed at most. The fact that they are aware of good influence of the environment they study in or the motivation means that teachers should provide the students with it as much as possible. If the students really think the congenial atmosphere helps, then it is our task to provide them with it. Similarly, the respondents agreed with the influence of positive motivation, and thus teachers should motivate the students not only in the form of grades, but also by some experience of their own, explain why is the second language such important, and try to do everything at hand to motivate their students in positive way.

As I commented on the positively answered theories, it is time to discuss the negative ones. The theories which were answered negatively are: Behaviorist Theory, Creative Construction, and Interlanguage.

The Behaviorist Theory and its principles were mostly rejected by the students. They basically agreed only on the importance of vocabulary learning, but they agreed really overwhelmingly. This indicates that teachers should pay more attention to vocabulary development, because it is certain that vocabulary is the cornerstone of a language. The students generally disagreed with the statements which claimed language is learned through imitation. If we compare the result of the Nativist Theory (the respondents think a language could be learned passively) and Behaviorist Theory (through imitation), it may indicate preference in passive language behavior. It might seem important to encourage students to

imitate the language rather than just accept it. I propose one of the way to achieve activity in second language acquirers could be alternative teaching methods, games or anything that stirs up activity in the classroom.

The theory of Creative Construction was definitely not the one the respondents agreed with. The statements about both positive and negative transfer were answered negatively in relation to the theory, which might seem somewhat stunning as well as with the last theory to discuss here, the Interlanguage. The respondents disagreed with the term fossilization. It is interesting to see how they disagree with this term at the same time they agree that the best way to acquire a language is not to move it beyond their actual knowledge. The respondents basically agreed that omission of certain grammatical rules, or making up of their own words is a good idea. I suppose teachers should encourage them in this in a way, that it is still better to speak somewhat peculiar, than not to speak at all. Of course, there has to be some balance, but if the students support these statements, we should stop to think about it and gain as much as we can out of it, and follow the students' needs.

Limitation of the Research

If I look back on the research I have done, there are definitely some weaknesses. If I did it again, I think I would make the questionnaire more precise and clearer to the respondents. Some of the statements presented to the students were probably not clear enough, and so they might have found them difficult to answer.

Suggestions for Further Research

I suggest to examine some other SLA theories, and do the very similar research, which would show the knowledge of the grammar school students within broader scope. It is also possible to prepare somewhat adjusted research for young children and adults of different ages to cover a wide range of respondents in order to analyze the awareness of SLA of all the population.

VI. CONCLUSION

The goal of this thesis was to investigate different SLA theories, and find out, if the grammar school students are aware of those theories when put in practice. I chose only several theories out of many others, but those are definitely sufficient for understanding the complexities of SLA. The investigation of SLA theories was followed by the research in the form of questionnaire given to the sample of 45 students.

This thesis shows the grammar school students agree with some of SLA theories, but disagree with some others. Both teachers and students should take this fact into consideration, because it could help them to cooperate better in language classes. The research described which of the theories were well-known to the students, but at the same time it showed us that teachers should increase the awareness of certain SLA theories, which might be useful for more effective students' language learning.

Based on the findings, the grammar school students agreed with about a half of the theories. In the Implications part, I mention that it would be a good idea to prolong this research, and investigate the awareness of SLA among another different age groups to explore the general knowledge of SLA, so we, as teachers, could react to it, and improve our education system.

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APPENDIX

This part contains the questionnaire in Czech used for the research.

DOTAZNÍK

Věk:

Pohlaví:

Jak dlouho se učíte AJ? :

Ročník:

Vítejte u dotazníku. Jsem studentem pedagogické fakulty ZČU. Můj výzkum v rámci diplomové práce se zaměřuje na způsoby osvojování druhého jazyka (AJ). Dotazník zkoumá, jaké je obecné povědomí o učení se AJ mezi studenty. Rád bych vás poprosil o vyplnění.

Instrukce: Vaši odpověď, prosím zaznamenávejte vždy napravo od otázky zakroužkováním čísla, na stupnici 1-4, podle následující legendy:

1 = Zcela souhlasím, 2 = Souhlasím, 3 = Nesouhlasím, 4 = zcela nesouhlasím

- | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Průběžné učení se slovíček je nejlepší způsob jak se naučit cizí jazyk | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 2. Každý má schopnost se naučit cizí jazyk. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 3. Děti se učí jazyk snadněji než jedinci po pubertě. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 4. Je lepší vyjadřovat se plynule a rychle s chybami, než pomalu a gramaticky přesně. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 5. Příjemná atmosféra ve třídě napomáhá učení se cizího jazyka. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 6. Ke správnému osvojení cizího jazyka je nejlepší poslech, kterému studenti téměř úplně rozumí. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 7. Slovosled jazyka, který se žák učí, je ze všeho nejméně důležitý. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 8. K plnému osvojení cizího jazyka je potřeba mít tzv. „jazykový talent“. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 9. Při osvojování cizího jazyka je nejdůležitější plynulost mluveného projevu. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 10. V cizojazyčném prostředí není potřeba se aktivně učit jazyk pro jeho osvojení. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 11. K rozvoji učení cizího jazyka dochází tehdy, je-li student vystaven jazykovému obsahu nad rámec svých současných dovedností. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

Instrukce: Vaši odpověď, prosím zaznamenávejte vždy napravo od otázky zakroužkováním čísla, na stupnici 1-4, podle následující legendy:

1 = Zcela souhlasím, 2 = Souhlasím, 3 = Nesouhlasím, 4 = zcela nesouhlasím

12. Po určité době dochází u studentů cizího jazyka k „zakrnění“, po kterém se nejsou schopni nic nového naučit.	1	2	3	4
13. Je dobré mít mezi učením dlouhé přestávky, aby měl student čas vstřebat veškerou látku.	1	2	3	4
14. Pokud si student není jist gramatickým pravidlem (např. minulý/předpřítomný čas), je lepší ho raději úplně vynechat.	1	2	3	4
15. Ke správnému osvojení cizího jazyka je nejlepší poslech, kterému studenti rozumí jen některá slovíčka a zbytek se tak musí naučit.	1	2	3	4
16. Studenti se stejným mateřským jazykem dělají stejné chyby při osvojování cizího jazyka.	1	2	3	4
17. Pro osvojení si slovíček je užítí mnemotechnických pomůcek nejlepší technika (leg – legíny, burglar – bulhar).	1	2	3	4
18. Jazyk se lze naučit i pasivně, pouze poslechem autentického materiálu (TV, rádio, PC).	1	2	3	4
19. K osvojování cizího jazyka je nejdůležitější gramatika.	1	2	3	4
20. Je v pořádku použít vymyšlené slovíčko za pomoci češtiny, pokud si žák nevybavuje správné anglické. Např. Bankomat → Bancomate/Bank-o'-matic (správně anglicky ATM).	1	2	3	4
21. Motivace je při učení cizího jazyka nejdůležitějším faktorem.	1	2	3	4
22. Studenti bez ohledu na jejich mateřský jazyk dělají stejné chyby při osvojování cizího jazyka.	1	2	3	4
23. Všeobecné znalosti a přehled usnadňují osvojení druhého jazyka.	1	2	3	4
24. Ke správnému učení je důležité postupně přidávat novou látku.	1	2	3	4
25. Dospělí se dokážou naučit cizí jazyk rychleji než děti.	1	2	3	4
26. Většina chyb je způsobeno tím, že se studentovi pletou slova z mateřského jazyka.	1	2	3	4
27. Cizí jazyk se člověk naučí převážně napodobováním.	1	2	3	4

SHRNUTÍ

Tato diplomová práce zkoumá obecné povědomí žáků středních škol o teoriích, možnostech a postupech osvojování druhého jazyka. Práce obsahuje popis některých základních teorií SLA, na které navazuje praktický výzkum formou dotazníku vyplněného žáky gymnázia. Cílem bylo zjistit celkovou informovanost žáků a nalézt body na které je třeba se v budoucnu zaměřit. Práce nadále obsahuje návrhy na možné využití získaných informací v pedagogickém prostředí.