TEACHING ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

Unit Six: The Empirical Basis of Second Language Teaching and Learning
IS LEARNING A SECOND LANGUAGE LIKE LEARNING A FIRST?

- Psycholinguistic mechanisms
- The acquisition of syntax
- Discourse Acquisition
Psycholinguistics is the study of the psychological and neurobiological factors that allow humans to acquire, use, comprehend and produce language.
Psycholinguistic mechanisms

- Grammars
- Syntax
- Vocabularies
- Other factors that allow us to produce & understand language
PSYCHOLINGUISTIC MECHANISMS IN THE L1 & L2

- People learn the L1 at a young age when the brain is still forming
- An L2 is learned when a person is much older and the brain has developed more

- When a person learns the L1, it is the first language they’ve learned (no previous experience)
- Have previous experience in learning a language (L1 influences L2)
The ‘Innate Hypothesis’ suggests that the ability to acquire language is a facility unique to the human race.

We inherit this ability genetically in the same way as other species inherit such things as the ability to migrate to certain parts of the world to mate and breed.
all languages have the same basic structural foundation (i.e. all have nouns, verbs, adjectives, etc)

Universal Grammar (UG) and its interaction with the rest of the brain is what allows children to become fluent in any language during the first few years of life
Born with a template of all possible sounds of the world’s languages. We gradually fill in template as we hear the language(s) spoken around us.
The role of chronological age on second language acquisition

• Age-related differences
• The critical period hypothesis
AGE-RELATED DIFFERENCES

The age in which a learner begins learning a new language does not affect the route (i.e., how they get to being able to communicate in an L2), but the order in which they learn to function differs.
AGE RELATED DIFFERENCES

- Starting age affects the rate of learning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1969</td>
<td>Begins L2</td>
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<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>Begins to produce sounds/small words</td>
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<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>Has acquired large vocabulary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1972</td>
<td>Able to put words into sentences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1975</td>
<td>Struggles with pronunciation patterns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>Able to understand and use grammatical structures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>Can use language well, but still struggles with pragmatics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>Non-native like pronunciation and cultural misuses of language still apparent</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Has complete mastery of the L1
- Has developed pragmatic competency in the language
- Born
AGE RELATED DIFFERENCES

How long we learn a language and the age in which we begin learning the language have a direct affect upon how well we are able to use the language.

- Increase years of exposure=better fluency
- Younger starting age=higher level of accuracy
Supporters of the critical period hypothesis suggest that there is a period in a person’s life (sometime around puberty) when biological changes in the brain begin to function independently. When this occurs, acquiring native-like competency in a language becomes difficult, if not impossible.
“Ahhhhhh! I’ve been studying Spanish for seven years, and I still can’t speak it fluently!”

“Well, honey, it’s not your fault. You didn’t start young.”
### Critical Period Hypothesis Too Rigid?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language learner in children</th>
<th>Language learning in adults</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Undeniable evidence: children learn languages faster</td>
<td>Difficulty in learning L2 related to:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Less accessible access (in the brain) to UG</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Complex sets of input</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Self-consciousness that comes with adulthood</td>
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</table>
THE CRITICAL PERIOD AND ITS RELEVANCE TO LANGUAGE TEACHING

Hypothesis states

Post-pubescent learners are not going to be likely to acquire a native-like pronunciation and possibly not be able to fully acquire the syntax and morphology of the second language.

Teaching Implications

- use the critical age hypothesis in order to restructure the way you teach pronunciation to post-pubescent learners
- Use structured pronunciation drills and compare phonemes from the L2 to the L1
OTHER LEARNER CHARACTERISTICS AFFECTING SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

Intelligence
Aptitude
Personality
Motivation & Attitude
Learning Style
Learner Beliefs
Difficulties in research on learner characteristics and SLA:

1. A learner’s language proficiency can be defined and measured in many ways. There are many ways to define the ‘success’ of language learner.

2. It is not possible to directly observe and measure qualities such as motivation, personality, aptitude, and intelligence. They are simply labels of behavior.

3. These psychological variables are often not independent of one another. Researchers may use the same labels to describe different sets of behavioral traits.
Intelligence levels may be a good means of predicting how successful a learner will be at language learning.

Intelligence highly related to performance on reading, dictation and writing skills but not on listening comprehension or free oral production.
INTELLIGENCE

- **Linguistic intelligence**: speaking, using words, writing, giving presentations, solving word problems.
- **Logical-mathematical intelligence**: using numbers, logic, calculations, learning and understanding grammar rules
- **Spatial intelligence**: drawing, painting, using color, art, graphics, pictures, maps, and charts
- **Bodily-kinesthetic intelligence**: muscular coordination, athletic skill, body language, drama, and theater.
- **Musical intelligence**: using music, tones, hearing; producing the intonation and rhythm of a language
- **Interpersonal intelligence**: talking with other people, understanding them, using language to communicate
- **Intrapersonal intelligence**: self-knowledge, self-confidence using language to analyze oneself.
Measured by verbal IQ tests

- Strong factor in language learning involving language analysis and rule learning

Less important

- When language learning is focused on communication and interaction.
Strong academic skills does NOT equate to a successful second language learning.
Able to identify and memorize new sounds

Able to understand the function of words in sentence

Able to examine language samples to figure out grammatical rules

Memorize new Words
APTITUDE

- There is some evidence that certain individuals have an aptitude for language learning. However, with the adoption of communicative language teaching, aptitude may not be relevant for learning an L2.

- Definitive results are inconclusive because it is difficult to measure and define ‘aptitude’ for research studies.
PERSONALITY

- Extroverts
- Introverts
- Anxiety
- Empathy
- Self-esteem
**Motivation & Attitude**

**Communicative needs**
- If learners need to speak the L2 in a wide range of social situations or to fulfill professional ambitions, they will be motivated to learn.

**Attitude towards the L2 community**
- If learners have favorable attitudes towards the speakers of the language, they will desire more contact with them.

If a learners only reason for learning the L2 is external pressure (e.g. curriculum requirements) then internal motivation will be minimal and general attitude may be negative.
## Types of Motivation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Intrinsic (internal)</th>
<th>Extrinsic (Externa.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Integrative</td>
<td></td>
<td>The learner wishes to learn the L2 for personal growth and cultural enrichment.</td>
<td>Someone else wishes the learner to know the L2 for an integrative reason.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instrumental</td>
<td></td>
<td>The learner wishes to achieve practical goals for using the L2. (e.g. for a job)</td>
<td>External power wants the learner to learn the L2 for a practical reason (e.g. A hotel in Japan asks its staff to get language training)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Learning Style

What's Your Learning Style?

Visual
Visual learners usually retain more information when they can see something that graphically depicts what they are trying to learn. Visual learners should study using visual aids whenever possible. Flash cards, pictures, drawings—anything that will give you a visual memory.

Auditory
Auditory learners will retain more information when they hear something. For auditory learners, the best way to learn is to listen...over and over. Use a tape recorder. Read out loud. Have a friend quiz you orally.

Tactile
Tactile learners will retain more information when they use the “hands-on” approach—like labs and demonstrations.
## Cognitive Learning Styles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Field-independence vs. field-dependence</th>
<th>Reflectivity vs. impulsivity</th>
<th>Right-brain dominance vs. left-brain dominance</th>
<th>Tolerance of ambiguity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
UNDERSTANDING YOUR COGNITIVE LEARNING STYLE

http://www.edutopia.org/multiple-intelligences-learning-styles-quiz
Learners personal beliefs on how language should be taught influence the learning process.
THE EFFECT OF INSTRUCTION ON SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

- The morpheme order studies
- Conscious learning versus subconscious acquisition
- Comprehensible input
- Comprehensible output
- Developmental stages
THE MORPHEME ORDER STUDIES

“...a natural sequence in how L2 grammars are learned?”
Language Transfer

- Interferences from the L1 which affect language abilities in the L2; such as cultural, differing grammatical structures, pragmatic differences, phonemes, etc.
**LANGUAGE TRANSFER**

Positive: helps learners acquire properties of the L2

- Same basic structures
- Results unnoticed
- Learner very aware of similarities and uses them to his/her benefit

Negative: interferences from the L1 which hinders learners in the L2

- The transferring of items and structures that are not the same in both languages
LANGUAGE TRANSFER FORMS

- Chinglish (Chinese)
- Czenglish (Czech)
- Denglisch (German)
- Dunglish (Dutch)
- Engrish (or Japlish) (Japanese)
- Finglish (Finnish)
- Franglais (French)
- Hinglilsh (Hindi);
- Konglish (Korean)
- Manglish (Malaysian);
- Poglish (Polish)
- Porglish (Portuguese)
- Runglish (Russian)
- Serblish (Serbian)
- Spanglish (Spanish)
- Swenglish (Swedish)
- Taglish (Tagalog)
- Tanglish (Tamil)
- Tinglish (Thai)
- Turlish (Turkish)
- Yinglish (Yiddish)
CONSCIOUS LEARNING VERSUS SUBCONSCIOUS ACQUISITION

Conscious learning
- Focuses on grammatical rules

Subconscious learning
- Knowing when & how to use language to communicate meaning
- Relies upon a learners background knowledge, knowledge of the world around him/her, culture, etc.

Krashen believed that without both of these factors, acquisition cannot take place.
The learner constructs a system of abstract linguistic rules which underlies comprehension & production of the L2. This system of rules is viewed as a ‘mental grammar’.
INTERLANGUAGE

- The learner’s grammar is open to influence from outside world. For example, omission, overgeneralization and transfer errors are apparent in language patterns.
- The learner’s grammar changes from time to time by adding rules, deleting rules and restructuring the system.
- Learners employ various learning strategies to develop their interlanguage.
- The learners grammar is likely to fossilize.
Comprehensible input means that students should be able to understand the essence of what is being said or presented to them.
USING COMPREHENSIBLE INPUT IN THE CLASSROOM

- Use context or visual cues
- Asking for clarifications
- Provide relevant background knowledge and content
- Provide instruction that draws on the experiences of students
OTHER TECHNIQUES FOR PROVIDING COMPREHENSIBLE INPUT IN THE CLASSROOM

- Use of consistent language
- Frequent use of visuals
- Providing frequent opportunities for students to express their ideas
COMPREHENSIBLE INPUT

Instructional dialogues
- Focus on accuracy of content
- Interactive teaching methodologies

Student opportunities to use oral language
- Cooperative learning
- Peer tutoring strategies
- Dialog journals
When there is a gap in the linguistic knowledge of the second language and the learner notices it, they can change their output in order to learn something new about the language.
We obtain knowledge when we attempt to convey a message but fail, but the learner eventually finds the words right words to get people to understand and ends up learning new knowledge about the language.
Output is what the language learner produces.
**Why is it important?**

- Comprehensible output is important because we want students to learn in the classroom and gain knowledge about the second language.

- When the student is given good comprehensible input, enough wait time, feedback, and help from peers, output is achievable.
When providing an opportunity to continue practicing the language they are trying to learn, the greater chance that they will move towards comprehensible output.

The greater the students comprehensible output the more the student will succeed in school.
**Key research**

- External and internal feedback is extremely important when trying to learn a L2 because that is when a learner notices a gap in their original output.
- Teachers should help students with external feedback (asking for clarification) in a way that will help and encourage the student to find a new way to convey their message.
- Students should be given the opportunity to figure things out on their own (internal feedback) as well as to collaborate with peers to learn more about the L2.
## What can teachers do to increase comprehensible output?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Do’s</strong></th>
<th><strong>Don’ts</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Give positive feedback</td>
<td>Use words or concepts that are beyond the reach and understanding of the students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Put students in small groups so they can help each other</td>
<td>Have the students work independently all of the time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Give students appropriate wait time</td>
<td>Talk down to students if they aren’t understanding the concept quickly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model to the students how to solve their language problems themselves</td>
<td>Rush students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Give students the opportunity to correct themselves on their own</td>
<td>Autocorrect students mistakes immediately</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
DEVELOPMENTAL STAGES

- Grammatical items can be sequenced into a series of stages
- Complexity of item makes demands on short term memory
- This affects a learners speech pattern
Example: Third Person --s

1. Whether the subject is in the third person or not: He walks versus I walk.
2. Whether the subject is singular of plural: He walks versus They walk.
3. Whether the action is present tense or not: He walks versus He walked.
4. Whether the action is habitual or going on at the moment of speaking. He walks to school versus He is walking to school.
The relationship between learning strategies & acquisition

- Defining learning strategies
- Learner types
- Strategy training and task performance
DEFINING LEARNING STRATEGIES

“The mental and communicative processes that learner use to learn a second language.”
HOW DO WE NAME AND ORGANIZE LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGIES FOR LEARNING?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Metacognitive strategies for Learning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Organize/plan (What do I do before I start?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Manage (What do I do while I’m working on the task?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Monitor (How do I make sure I am doing the task correctly?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Evaluate (What do I do after I have finished the task?)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tasked-based strategies for Learning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• 16 task based strategies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Divided into four categories:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1) Use what you know</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) Use your imagination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) Use your organizational skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4) Use a variety of resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concrete learners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analytical learners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communicative learners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authority-oriented learners</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
THE GOOD LANGUAGE LEARNER

- Thinks about how s/he is learning
- Is willing to experiment and take risks
- Is realistic
- Is independent
- Is organized and active
- Has a balanced concern for communication & accuracy
HOMEWORK: WRITE A ONE-TWO PAGE ESSAY ON ONE OF THE FOLLOWING

- Why is second language acquisition fundamentally different from first language acquisition?
- What is the critical period and what is it meant to explain?
- Explain the concepts of language transfer and interlanguage.
- Discuss comprehensible input and output.
- How do differences in learner characteristics affect second language acquisition?
REFERENCES


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