d Introductions to Language Study

Series Editor H.G.Widdowson

This is a series of brief surveys intended for readers new to the formal study of language. Each book contains four parts:

- **SURVEY**
  An up-to-date overview of the area concerned
- **READINGS**
  Short readings with study questions
- **REFERENCES**
  A selection of annotated references
- **GLOSSARY**
  Explanations of terms, cross referenced to the Survey

This structure is designed to allow different groups of readers to focus on different parts of the book according to their interest and need.

Second Language Acquisition

This book outlines Second Language Acquisition, the study of the way in which people learn a language other than their mother tongue. It is designed to make the essentials of this rapidly expanding area accessible to readers encountering it for the first time.

Second Language Acquisition

Ellis

Oxford

Oxford Introductions to Language Study

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Second Language Acquisition

Rod Ellis

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Thus, strategies that involve formal practice (for example, rehearsing a new word) contribute to the development of linguistic competence whereas strategies involving functional practice (for example, seeking out native speakers to talk to) aid the development of communicative skills. Successful learners may also call on different strategies at different stages of their development. However, there is the problem with how to interpret this research. Does strategy use result in learning or does learning increase learners' ability to employ more strategies? At the moment, it is not clear.

An obvious question concerns how these learning strategies relate to the general kinds of psycholinguistic processes discussed in Chapter 6. What strategies are involved in noticing or noticing the gap, for example? Unfortunately, however, no attempt has yet been made to incorporate the various learning strategies that have been identified into a model of psycholinguistic processing. The approach to date has been simply to describe strategies and quantify their use.

The study of learning strategies is of potential value to language teachers. If those strategies that are crucial for learning can be identified, it may prove possible to train students to use them. We will examine this idea in the broader context of a discussion of the role of instruction in L2 acquisition.

9 Instruction and L2 acquisition

One of the goals of SLA is to improve language teaching. To this end some researchers have studied what impact teaching has on L2 learning. In this chapter we will consider three branches of this research. The first concerns whether teaching learners grammar has any effect on their interlanguage development. Do learners learn the structures they are taught? The second draws on the research into individual learner differences. Do learners learn better if the kind of instruction they receive matches their preferred ways of learning an L2? The third branch looks at strategy training. Does it help to teach learners how to use the learning strategies employed by 'good language learners'? In each case, we will consider the main issues involved and sample some of the studies that have been carried out.

Form-focused instruction

Traditionally, language pedagogy has emphasized form-focused instruction. The Grammar Translation Method and the Audiolingual Method both involve attempts to teach learners grammar, differing only in how this is to be accomplished. More recently, however, language pedagogy has emphasized the need to provide learners with real communicative experiences. Communicative Language Teaching is premised on the assumption that learners do not need to be taught grammar before they can communicate but will acquire it naturally as part of the process of learning to communicate. In some versions of Communicative Language Teaching, then, there is no place at all for the direct teaching of grammar.

This brief review of the pedagogical background suggests that there are two key questions: (1) Does form-focused instruction work (i.e. do learners learn what they have been taught)? and, assuming a positive answer to (1), (2) What kind of form-focused instruction works best?

Does form-focused instruction work?

One way in which we might investigate whether formal instruction has any effect on interlanguage is to compare the development of untutored and tutored learners. If we find no differences in the order and sequence of L2 acquisition this would suggest that form-focused instruction has no effect. On the other hand, the existence of differences would suggest that form-focused instruction does have an impact.

In one such study, Teresa Pica compared three groups of L2 learners—an untutored group, a tutored group, and a mixed group (i.e. one that had experienced both instruction and naturalistic learning). She found that the accuracy order of a number of grammatical features (see page 21) was broadly the same in the three groups, suggesting that instruction had had little overall effect on acquisition. However, when she looked closely at particular features she found some interesting differences in them. The tutored group was more accurate on plural *-s* than the untutored group but less accurate on progressive verb *-ing*. The mixed group was intermediate in both cases. In contrast, there were no accuracy differences among the three groups on articles. These results led Pica to suggest that the effects of instruction may depend on the target structure that is being taught. If the structure is formally simple and manifests a straightforward form–function relationship (as in the case of plural *-s*) instruction may lead to improved accuracy. If the structure is formally simple and salient but is functionally fairly complex (as is the case with progressive *-ing*) instruction may help learners to learn the form but not its use so learners end up making a lot of errors. If a structure lacks saliency and is functionally very complex (as is the case with English articles) instruction has no effect at all.

The question is how significant the effects of instruction actually are. Only if the instruction can be shown to enable learners to construct 'rules' can it be said to have an effect on the their underlying competence. The distinction between item learning and system learning (see page 13) is important here. When learners are taught the French articles '*le*' and '*la*' they may succeed in learning which article to use with the specific set of nouns that were the focus of the instruction. That is, they learn the gender of each noun as a separate item. However, they may fail to develop an understanding of the complex rules that account for whether a noun is masculine or feminine in French. Instruction, then, may be effective in teaching items but not in teaching systems, particularly when these are complex.

There are, in fact, strong theoretical grounds for believing that instruction will not have any long-lasting effect on the way in which learners construct their interlanguage systems. In Chapter 2 we saw that learners appear to possess some kind of 'built-in syllabus' that regulates how and when they acquire particular grammatical structures. It is possible that this 'syllabus' is not amenable to modification from the outside.

This claim can be tested by investigating whether instruction has any effect on the sequence of acquisition of particular grammatical structures. Again, one way of doing this is by comparing tutored and untutored learners. In one such study, a comparison was made between the acquisition of German word-order rules by a group of adult classroom learners and that reported for migrant workers acquiring German without instruction in Germany (see page 58). The sequence was the same, suggesting that the instruction had had no effect on the processing strategies involved in the acquisition of these word-order rules. The instructed learners seemed to follow their own syllabus. However, they proceeded through this syllabus more rapidly than the untutored learners and were more likely to reach the final stage.

Another way of testing the claim is by designing instructional experiments to see if teaching a particular structure results in its acquisition. There have been a number of such experiments. Manfred Pienemann, for example, investigated whether form-focused instruction led to a group of ten-year-old children acquiring one of the German word-order rules (the inversion rule). He reports in detail on only two of the children but the results are highly suggestive. One of the learners, Giovanni, had already

reached a stage of development immediately prior to the stage at which the target structure is naturally acquired. In this case, the instruction was effective. Giovanni acquired the inversion rule. The other learner, Teresa, was far less advanced and for her the instruction did not work. She failed to acquire inversion.

This study, together with additional research carried out in Australia, led Pienemann to propose the **teachability hypothesis.** This hypothesis predicts that instruction can only promote language acquisition if the interlanguage is close to the point when the structure to be taught is acquired in the natural setting (so that sufficient processing requirements are developed). So the teachability hypothesis, which has received considerable support in recent research, suggests that instruction does not subvert the natural sequence of acquisition but rather helps to speed up learners' passage through it. The pedagogic relevance of this, however, is limited as teachers are not likely to know which learners in their class are ready to be taught a particular structure and will have no easy way of finding out.

Pienemann's research shows that form-focused instruction can have an effect on acquisition. But how durable are these effects? Early research on progressive *-ing*, for example, revealed that instruction in this feature caused learners to increase their use of it in their communicative speech, often incorrectly, but that the effects were short-lived. Another study, directed at teaching French learners of English that placing an adverb between the verb and the direct object of a sentence is ungrammatical (see page 66), produced similar results. Initial gains in accuracy disappeared over time.

Other studies, however, have shown that instruction can have effects that are both beneficial and long-lasting. For example, a carefully designed set of materials for teaching the distinction between two French verb tenses resulted in clear gains in accuracy, which were evident not only immediately after the period of instruction but also three months later. In fact, the learners' ability to use these verb forms correctly went on improving. There is ample evidence that the acquisition of at least some linguistic structures can be permanently influenced by instruction.

The question arises as to why some structures seem to be permanently affected and others are not? One possibility is that it depends on the nature of the instruction. Another possibility, which we have already examined, is that it depends on the nature of the target structure. For example, when the instruction affects system learning the effects may be long-lasting but when it only influences item learning the effects may be less durable. A third possibility is that long-lasting effects occur only when learners have subsequent opportunities to hear and use the target structure in communication. This might explain why instruction produces durable effects for French verb tenses and for question forms, which occur frequently, but not for adverbs, which do not. However, we do not yet have a definite answer to this important question.

So far we have considered whether learners learn what they have been taught. However, it is clearly not possible to teach learners all the rules of the grammar of a language. There are simply too many. What, though, if teaching learners one grammatical structure triggers acquisition of one or more other structures? This is a distinct possibility given that some grammatical structures seem to be implicated with each other. For example, according to the accessibility hierarchy, the existence of a marked relative pronoun function in a language implicates the existence of other less marked functions. As we have already seen (page 64), this seems to hold true for interlanguages. An intriguing possibility, therefore, is that if learners can discover that the target language permits a marked function they will be able to generalize this knowledge to the unmarked functions. A number of studies have explored this possibility with interesting results. Teaching learners a relatively marked function, such as indirect object, does appear to trigger acquisition of the unmarked direct object and subject functions. However, it is not yet clear if such effects are durable nor is it clear whether this triggering effect applies to other grammatical structures.

Finally, we need to consider exactly what we mean by 'acquisition' when we talk about the effects of instruction. This is a crucial issue. It is one thing for instruction to have an effect on learners' ability to manipulate structures consciously and quite another for it to affect their ability to use structures with ease and accuracy in fluent communication. There is now ample evidence that the effects of form-focused instruction are not restricted to careful language use but are also evident in free communication.

What kind of form-focused instruction works best?

Given that instruction can work, it becomes important to discover whether some kinds of instruction work better than others. Arguably, it is this question that is of greater interest to teachers. The issues at stake are not merely a question of pedagogical efficiency, however. They are also of considerable theoretical significance for SLA.

To illustrate this we will consider a number of options in form-focused instruction. The first concerns the distinction between input-based and production-based practice. Traditionally, grammar teaching has emphasized production. Indeed, language pedagogy offers a rich array of techniques for eliciting the production of targeted structures from students (for example, substitution drills, blank-filling exercises, dialogues, and games of various kinds). However, as we have seen, some theories of SLA see interlanguage as driven by input rather than output. An interesting question—from both a pedagogical and a theoretical standpoint—is whether instruction that emphasizes input-processing (A in Figure 9.1) works better than instruction that emphasizes output production (B in Figure 9.1).

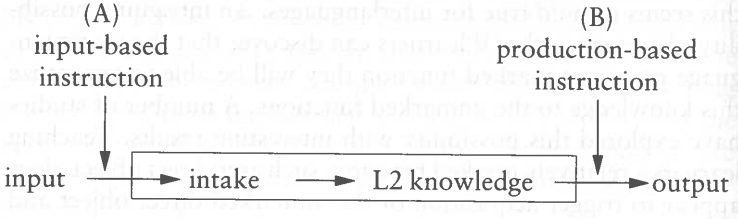

FIGURE 9.1 *Input-based and production-based instruction*

An experimental study carried out by Bill VanPatten and Teresa Cadierno was designed to investigate this. One group of learners was exposed to traditional **production-based instruction**, and another to **input-based instruction** where they had to listen to and respond to sentences containing the target structure. At the end of the instruction both groups completed two tests, one a test of production and the other a test of comprehension. The group that received the input-based instruction did far better on the comprehension test and just as well on the production test. This study, then, suggests that form-focused instruction that emphasizes input processing may be very effective. It also supports theories of L2 acquisition that emphasize the role of conscious noticing in input; input-based instruction may work because it induces noticing in learners.

The second issue, concerns **consciousness-raising**. This term refers to attempts to make learners aware of the existence of specific linguistic features in the target language. One way in which this can be done is by supplying the learner with positive evidence. An alternative approach is to provide negative evidence.

In Chapter 7 we saw that children rely more or less exclusively on positive evidence. The fact that such evidence fails to supply the information children need to master their L1 constitutes a major argument in support of the existence of UG. The issue in SLA is whether adult L2 learners can also learn from positive evidence or whether they require negative evidence, at least for some structures. This addresses the wider issue of whether older learners have continued access to UG (see page 69). If adult L2 learners can learn solely from positive input this would suggest that UG is still available to them; conversely, if they cannot, this is an indication that it is not available.

To test whether positive input is sufficient, Martha Trahey and Lydia White designed a study in which eleven-year-old French learners of L2 English were given instruction where they were 'flooded' with input containing adverb sentences over a two-week period. The children were not given any explicit information about adverb sentences or any negative feedback (i.e. they were not corrected). In one respect, the positive evidence worked. The learners showed a dramatic increase in the use of subject–adverb–verb–object (SAVO) sentences, for example:

Anne quietly watched the television.

In another respect, however, it did not work, as the learners continued to make errors by inserting the adverb between the verb and direct object (SVAO), as in:

Anne watched quietly the television.

This suggests that positive evidence is not sufficient to reset a parameter and, perhaps, that UG is not available to L2 learners of

this age. It is possible, of course, that more positive input would have done the job. The implication for language pedagogy is that positive input in the form of **input flooding** may help learners to start using some difficult forms (like SAVO) but may not be sufficient to destabilize interlanguage and prevent fossilization. That is, positive input does not show learners that forms like SVAO are ungrammatical.

If positive evidence does not work, then, perhaps negative evidence does. Another study by White, referred to earlier, found that giving learners explicit information about adverb sentences together with negative feedback did enable them, temporarily at least, to reduce instances of the SVAO error. Other studies have also shown that learners are able to make use of negative evidence, in the form of teacher correction, to eliminate errors in their production.

The task of teasing out how the various instructional options affect the acquisition of grammatical structures has only just begun. The promise of such studies is that they can make a contribution to both language pedagogy, by helping to make teaching more efficient, and to SLA, by providing a means of testing theories of acquisition.

Learner–instruction matching

A distinct possibility, however, is that the same instructional option is not equally effective for all L2 learners. Individual differences to do with such factors as learning style and language aptitude are likely to influence which options work best.

For example, the type of instruction learners can benefit from most may depend on the nature of their language aptitude (see page 73). Learners vary in the particular types of ability they are strong in. Some learners are good at segmenting sounds in the speech they hear but are less effective at identifying the grammatical functions of words in sentences. Other learners are the opposite. Learners with differing kinds of ability may be able to achieve similar levels of success providing that the type of instruction enables them to maximize their strengths. There is some evidence to suggest that this is the case.

It is obviously important to take individual differences into account when investigating the effects of instruction. For example, even if it is eventually shown that input-based instruction works better overall than production-based instruction, it does not follow that this will be true for all learners.

Strategy training

Teaching learners specific grammatical structures constitutes an attempt to intervene directly in interlanguage development. An alternative approach is to intervene more indirectly by identifying strategies that are likely to promote acquisition and providing training in them.

Most of the research on strategy training has focused on vocabulary learning. The results have been rather mixed. Training students to use strategies that involve different ways of making associations involving target words has generally proved successful. For example, the key word method requires learners to form two kinds of associations. First, learners associate the target word with a word which is the same or similar to an L1 word (for example, the Japanese word '*ohio*', meaning 'morning', might be associated with 'Ohio', a state in the United States). Second, the L1 word is linked to a mental image that incorporates the meaning of the target word (for example, the learner thinks of a very cold morning in winter in Ohio). These associations have been shown to promote both retention of and access to the target word. However, other studies have been less convincing in demonstrating the effectiveness of strategy training.

The idea of strategy training is attractive because it provides a way of helping learners to become autonomous (i.e. of enabling them to take responsibility for their own learning). The main problem is that not enough is known about which strategies and which combinations of strategies work best for L2 acquisition.

Summary

In this section we have examined whether it is possible to teach an L2. We have seen that direct instruction can help in a number of ways. It can lead to enhanced accuracy, it can help learners progress through developmental stages more rapidly, and it can

destabilize interlanguage grammars that have fossilized. However, direct instruction is not always successful nor are its effects always durable. Constraining factors are the nature of the target structure and the learner's stage of development. Less is currently known about what type of direct instruction works best. Input-based instruction may prove as effective as production-based instruction and, perhaps, even more so. Input-flooding may help students learn features in the input but does not destabilize interlanguage grammars (i.e. it does not get rid of established errors). For this, explicit instruction and negative feedback may be needed. It is also very likely that the effectiveness of different types of instruction will depend on the abilities and predispositions of individual learners. An alternative to direct instruction is strategy training. However, uncertainty exists regarding the content, methodology, and outcomes of such training.

10 Conclusion: multiple perspectives in SLA

It is tempting to try to conclude this brief survey of SLA by offering a general model of L2 acquisition that incorporates all the various perspectives we have explored. However, there is a good reason for not doing this; there is no single theory or model or even framework that can adequately incorporate the range of hypotheses which SLA has addressed. To put it another way, there is no single metaphor that can encompass all the metaphors that SLA has drawn on to explain how learners acquire an L2. What single theory can adequately encompass such disparate metaphors as 'investment', 'social distance', 'accommodation', 'scaffolding', 'noticing', 'interfacing', 'fossilization', 'monitoring', 'avoidance', 'Machiavellian motivation', 'intervention', and so on? It is true, as we have seen, that there is a dominant metaphor in SLA—that of the computer—but this excludes as much as it includes and, dangerously, forces a particular interpretation of what is involved in L2 acquisition on the reader.

There is, however, considerable disagreement within SLA about the need for a single model or, at least, the need for some principled selection among the theoretical positions on offer. On the one hand, there are those who argue that SLA needs to engage in the careful elimination of theories to demonstrate its maturity as a discipline. On the other hand, there are those who argue that L2 acquisition is a highly complex phenomenon and that, therefore, multiple theories are both inevitable and desirable. These different positions about the role of theory in SLA also call upon different metaphors; we can 'cull' theories or we can 'let all the flowers grow'.

The types of enquiry that characterize SLA and the types of

explanations provided reflect the different purposes of researchers. Some researchers have been primarily concerned with language pedagogy and have seen SLA as contributing to more effective language teaching. Others have been more concerned with linguistics and have seen SLA as a way of testing hypotheses about the nature of language. Still others have been concerned with the sociology of multilingual communities and are interested in SLA because it serves to illustrate how social context affects and is affected by language. For this reason alone we are likely to see SLA continue to offer multiple perspectives.

SECTION 2

Readings

Chapter 1

Introduction: describing and explaining L2 acquisition

Text 1

RICHARD SCHMIDT: 'Interaction, acculturation and the acquisition of communicative competence: a case study of an adult' in N. Wolfson and E. Judd (eds.): *Sociolinguistics and Second Language Acquisition*. Newbury House 1983, pages 168–9

In the following text, Schmidt asks to what extent Wes, the subject of his case study, is a 'good language learner'. He concludes that there is no straightforward answer to this question, that it depends on what is meant by 'language'.

Whether one considers Wes to be a good language learner or a poor language learner depends very much on one's definition of language and of the content of SLA. If language is seen as a means of initiating, maintaining, and regulating relationships and carrying on the business of living, then perhaps Wes is a good learner. If one views language as a system of elements and rules, with syntax playing a major role, then Wes is clearly a very poor learner. Friends and acquaintances who are not in the language or language teaching business generally evaluate Wes's English favorably, pointing out, for example, that 'I understand him a lot better than X, who's been here over twenty years.' Several sociolinguists with whom I have discussed his case have given similar evaluations, sometimes proclaiming him a superior language learner who just doesn't care about

grammatical do-dads, most of which are eliminated in normal speech anyway. Grammar teachers, on the other hand, generally consider him a disaster, possibly beyond rescue. Wes's own evaluation of his English ability is mixed, recognizing both strengths and weaknesses. He is quite clearly proud of what he has accomplished and knows that he can communicate much better in English than many nonnative speakers with much greater linguistic knowledge. ...

▷ *In what respects is Wes a 'good language learner' and in what respects is he not one?*

▷ *What is your own definition of a 'good language learner'?*

Schmidt now goes on to consider why Wes failed to learn the grammar of English. He examines a number of possible explanations, social and individual, but dismisses them all.

... It seems to me quite clear that Wes's failure to learn much of the grammatical component of his second language cannot be attributed to SOCIAL DISTANCE factors, to lack of need for or interest in meaningful communication and interaction, to personality factors such as self-consciousness, or to poor attitudes toward target language speakers. Low social distance, positive attitudes toward the second language community, and high integrative motivation to use the second language for communication have led to a considerable increase in overall *communicative* competence but have had little effect on improved *grammatical* competence.

▷ *What explanation can you offer for Wes's failure to acquire grammatical competence in English?*

Text 2

ROD ELLIS: 'Learning to communicate in the classroom: a study of two language learners' requests' in *Studies in Second Language Acquisition* 14, 1992, pages 20–21

Whereas Wes learned English in a natural context, the two learners discussed in the following text learned in a classroom context. Like Wes they were in some respects successful but their development was limited.

The classroom context in which J and R learned English afforded ample opportunities for natural language use. It enabled J and R to develop a basic ability to perform requests using target language forms. In addition, it proved sufficient to motivate the acquisition of a variety of linguistic exponents for encoding requests, thus affording the learners some degree of choice in the realization of their requests. ...

However, the study also found that J and R failed to acquire a full range of request types and forms. It also showed that they developed only a limited ability to vary their choice of request strategy in accordance with situational factors. One explanation for this is that the developmental process was not complete. However, it may be that even with more time the classroom environment is insufficient to guarantee the development of full target language norms, possibly because the kind of 'communicative need' that the learners experienced was insufficient to ensure development of the full range of request types and strategies. ... J and R had a clear interpersonal need to learn how to perform requests, and they also appeared to experience an expressive need to vary the way in which they performed them. It is less certain, however, that in the classroom situation they found themselves in they recognized any definite sociolinguistic need.

▷ *In what respects were J and R successful in learning how to make requests and in what respects were they unsuccessful?*

▷ *What do you think Ellis means by 'interpersonal need', 'expressive need', and 'sociolinguistic need'?*

▷ *How convincing do you find Ellis's explanations for the learners' lack of success? What other explanations might there be?*

Chapter 2
The nature of learner language

Errors and error analysis

Text 3

S. PIT CORDER: 'The significance of learners' errors' in *International Review of Applied Linguistics* 5. Also in *Error*

Analysis and Interlanguage. Oxford University Press 1981, page 10

One of the problems in describing learner language is that learners are not alone in producing deviant language; native speakers sometimes do so as well. This raises the important question as to how we can distinguish the deviations of learners from those of native speakers.

... The opposition between systematic and non-systematic errors is important. We are all aware that in normal adult speech in our native language we are continually committing errors of one sort or another. These, as we have so often been reminded recently, are due to memory lapses, physical states such as tiredness, and psychological conditions such as strong emotion. These are adventitious artefacts of linguistic performance and do not reflect a defect in our knowledge of our own language. We are normally immediately aware of them when they occur and can correct them with more or less complete assurance. It would be quite unreasonable to expect the learner of a second language not to exhibit such slips of the tongue (or pen), since he is subject to similar external and internal conditions when performing in his first or second language. We must therefore make a distinction between those errors which are the product of such chance circumstances and those which reveal his underlying knowledge of the language to date, or, as we may call it his *transitional competence*. The errors of performance will characteristically be unsystematic and the errors of competence, systematic. ... It will be useful therefore hereafter to refer to errors of performance as *mistakes*, reserving the term *error* to refer to the systematic errors of the learner from which we are able to reconstruct his knowledge of the language to date, i.e. his *transitional competence*.

▷ *What does Corder mean by saying that an 'error' is 'systematic' and a 'mistake' is 'unsystematic'? Do you see any problems with this definition?*

▷ *Later Corder recognizes that it may be difficult to distinguish 'errors' and 'mistakes'. Can you suggest ways of doing this?*

Text 4

HERLINDA CANCINO, ELLEN ROSANSKY, and JOHN SCHUMANN: 'The acquisition of English negatives and interrogatives by native Spanish speakers' in E. Hatch (ed.): *Second Language Acquisition*. Newbury House 1978, pages 209–11

This text outlines the method of analysis used to identify the sequence of acquisition for negatives which six native speakers of Spanish (two young children, two adolescents, and two adults) manifested over a ten-month period.

We did, however, think that perhaps traditional grammatical descriptions in the form of rules could be made of such linguistic subsystems as negative, interrogative or auxiliary. Our attempts to write rules for the negative proved fruitless. The constant development and concomitant variation in our subjects' speech at any one point made the task impossible. The technique to which we turned was to catalogue the various negating devices (*no*, *don't*, *can't*, *isn't*, etc.) and for each sample to determine the proportion of each negating device to total number of negatives (including negated adjectives, nouns adverbs, etc.) used by our subjects. ...

For all subjects, we have eliminated the expression 'I don't know', which seemed to be a memorized whole (or, using Evelyn Hatch's term, a 'routine formula'). ...

▷ *What do Cancino et al. mean by 'rules'? Can you state the rules for verb negation in English?*

▷ *Why exactly did they abandon the attempt to write rules for the six learners?*

▷ *Why was it important to eliminate routine formulas from the analysis?*

And here is the sequence of acquisition that was identified.

The 'cataloguing' approach produced the following results:

1 The subjects began negating by using *no V* constructions.
Marta: I no can see.
Carolina no go to play. ...

2 At the same time or shortly after the *no V* constructions appear, the subjects begin to negate using *don't V* constructions. Examples of *don't V* utterances are:
Marta: I don't hear.
He don't like it. ...

3 Next the subjects used the *aux-neg* constructions in which the negative is placed after the auxiliary. In general the first auxiliaries to be negated in this way were *is* and *can*.
Marta: Somebody is not coming in.
You can't tell her. ...

4 Finally, they learned the analyzed forms of *don't* (do not, doesn't, does not, didn't, did not):
Marta: It doesn't spin.
One night I didn't have the light.

▷ *Cancino et al. offer two possible reasons for why the learners began with 'no + verb' constructions. What are they? How could you decide which of these explanations is correct?*

▷ *Explain how the 'don't + V' stage differs from the 'aux + neg' stage.*

▷ *Why do you think 'analyzed don't' is the last stage in the sequence?*

Variability in learner language

The two texts here contrast two views about the significance of variability in learner language. Gregg sees competence as homogeneous and treats variability as an aspect of performance. Tarone sees the learner's competence itself as variable.

Text 5

KEVIN GREGG: 'The variable competence model of second language acquisition and why it isn't' in *Applied Linguistics* 11, 1990, pages 364 and 369

One of the incontrovertible facts of language use, whether L1 or L2, is that it varies. It varies across members of a speech community (I say tomayto, you say tomahto); it varies for the output of any given acquirer of a language, whether over time (I say tomayto, I used to say tomahto) or at any given time (I say tomayto, but I also say tomahto). The fact is incontrovertible; is it interesting? Or rather—since of course nothing human is alien to us, etc., and there's no disputing, etc.—is this fact of importance in constructing a theory of second language acquisition? Is it a fact to be dealt with by a theory, or is it simply that least valued of objects in scientific enquiry, a mere fact? Do we extend our investigation to the question of who says potayto and who says potahto, or do we call the whole thing off? ...

... It is not self-evident that systematicity should be a sufficient condition for calling something part of competence. Nor is it clear in what way performance ('learner behaviour'), systematic or otherwise, can be regarded as part of competence. This merging of performance and competence robs the concept of competence, under whatever name, of any useful function.

▷ *How would Gregg view the various types of variability in learner language discussed in the Survey? Why would he view them in this way?*

Text 6

ELAINE TARONE: 'On variation in interlanguage: a response to Gregg' in *Applied Linguistics* 11, 1990, page 394

... First, let us look at a variationist view of what gets acquired. In this view, knowledge itself can be variable, not always categorical. It is not the case that you *always* either know the rule or you don't. Especially when it is in the process of being formed, knowledge itself may be partial, fuzzy, or contain conflicting elements, as Romaine (1984) points out:

> Rule acquisition is not an all or nothing affair, and presumably 'complete' mastery involves both comprehension and production. There may be a number of aspects of the internal workings of a rule, some of which may be acquired before others. There are social dimensions of a rule relating to its use. (Romaine 1984: 78–9)

If we view knowledge itself as containing variability, the competence/performance distinction may become unnecessary.

▷ *In what ways do Tarone's views about variability differ from Gregg's?*

▷ *From your reading about variability in learner language in the Survey section, which of these positions (Gregg's or Tarone's) do you favour and why?*

Chapter 3
Interlanguage

Text 7

S. PIT CORDER: 'Language continua and the interlanguage hypothesis' in Proceedings of the Fifth Neuchâtel Colloquium, 1977. Also in *Error Analysis and Interlanguage*. Oxford University Press 1981, pages 87–8

According to interlanguage theory, L2 acquisition entails a continuum of evolving systems. A key issue, then, is what this continuum consists of. Here Corder outlines one view—not his own.

Although it is nowhere explicitly stated in his paper, it is evident that Selinker conceived of interlanguage as a 'dynamic system'. ... He makes it clear that he regards the 'interlanguage system' as the product of a psycholinguistic process of interaction between two linguistic systems, those of the mother tongue and the target language. He furthermore expounds at considerable length the notion of 'fossilization' which he characterizes as a 'mechanism' whereby 'speakers of a particular native language will keep certain linguistic items, rules, subsystems in their interlanguage, no matter what amount of instruction they receive in the target language'. Selinker therefore clearly conceived of interlanguage as being a *continuum*. ...

What is, with hindsight, strikingly absent in Selinker's original formulation is the notion of the interlanguage continuum as having the property of increasing complexity or elaboration. There is nothing in his original article which suggests that he saw the interlanguage continuum as anything but a *restructuring* of the learner's system from native language to target language *at the same level of complexity*. ...

So long as the concept of an interlanguage continuum was one of restructuring alone, it was bound to remain of relatively little value or generality, since it could only be seen as movement between one fully complex code and another. There were, therefore, as many interlanguage continua as there were languages involved in the learning situation and the sequences of restructuring would all be different and the errors predicted by the theory would all be 'transfer' errors.

▷ *What is meant by describing the interlanguage continuum as a 'restructuring continuum'?*

▷ *What objections can be levelled against this view of the interlanguage continuum?*

▷ *In what other ways might the interlanguage continuum be characterized?*

Chapter 4
Social aspects of interlanguage

Text 8

JOHN SCHUMANN: *The Pidginization Process: a Model for Second Language Acquisition*. Newbury House 1978, pages 80–1

Here Schumann describes two kinds of bad learning situations based on the factors contributing to social distance. (TL = target language; 2LL = second language learner.)

One of the bad situations ... would be where the TL group views the 2LL group as dominant and the 2LL group views itself in the same way; where both groups desire preservation and high enclosure for the 2LL group; where the 2LL group is both cohesive and large; where the two cultures are not congruent; where the two groups hold negative attitudes toward each other, and where the 2LL group intends to remain in the TL area for only a short time. This type of situation is likely to develop for Americans living in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. ...

The second bad situation ... has all the characteristics of the first except that in this case the 2LL group would consider itself

subordinate and would also be considered subordinate by the TL group. This has been the traditional situation of Navajo Indians living in the Southwest, and of American Indians in general.

▷ *Which of these two bad learning situations applies to Alberto, the Costa Rican immigrant worker Schumann studied?*

▷ *Can you think of any other examples of these two bad learning situations?*

▷ *Can you think of any exceptions (i.e. 2LL groups who are in bad learning situations but who are successful)? What explanation can you give for these exceptions?*

▷ *Can you think of examples of good learning situations?*

Text 9

BONNY N. PEIRCE: 'Social identity, investment, and language learning' in *TESOL Quarterly* 29, 1995, pages 15–16

Here Peirce describes some of the theoretical thinking that informed her study of the acquisition of English by adult women immigrants in Canada.

... Whereas humanist conceptions of the individual—and most definitions of the individual in SLA research—presuppose that every person has an essential, unique, fixed, and coherent core (introvert/extrovert; motivated/unmotivated; field dependent/field independent), postructuralism depicts the individual as diverse, contradictory, and dynamic; multiple rather than unitary, decentered rather than centered. ...

... the conception of social identity as a site of struggle is an extension of the position that social identity is multiple and contradictory. Subjectivity is produced in a variety of social sites, all of which are structured by relations of power in which the person takes up different subject positions—teacher, mother, manager, critic—some positions of which may be in conflict with others. In addition, the subject is not conceived of as passive; he/she is conceived of as both subject of and subject to relations of power within a particular site, community, and society: The subject has human agency. Thus the subject positions that a person takes up within a particular discourse are open to argument:

Although a person may be positioned in a particular way within a given discourse, the person might resist the subject position or even set up a counterdiscourse which positions the person in a powerful rather than marginalized subject position.

▷ *Can you think of some of the 'multiple identities' that might characterize the lives of immigrant learners of English in countries like Canada?*

▷ *What kinds of identity are likely to promote their L2 learning?*

▷ *How do you think Peirce would explain Alberto's failure to acquire much English?*

Chapter 5
Discourse aspects of interlanguage

Text 10

STEPHEN KRASHEN: *The Input Hypothesis: Issues and Implications*. Longman, 1985, pages 2–3

In this text, Krashen argues that acquisition will take place automatically if learners receive 'comprehensible input'. Krashen's views have had a notable impact on SLA and also on language pedagogy.

The Input Hypothesis claims that humans acquire language in only one way—by understanding messages, or by receiving 'comprehensible input'. We progress along the natural order ... by understanding input that contains structures at our next 'stage'—structures that are a bit beyond our current level of competence. (We move from *i*, our current level, to $i + 1$, the next level along the natural order, by understanding input containing $i + 1$; ...). We are able to understand language containing unacquired grammar with the help of context, which includes extra-linguistic information, our knowledge of the world, and previously acquired linguistic competence. The caretaker provides extra-linguistic context by limiting speech to the child to the 'here and now'. The beginning-language teacher provides context via visual aids (pictures and objects) and discussion of familiar topics. The Input Hypothesis has two corollaries:

a Speaking is a result of acquisition and not its cause. Speech cannot be taught directly but 'emerges' on its own as a result of building competence via comprehensible input.

b If input is understood, and there is enough of it, the necessary grammar is automatically provided. The language teacher need not attempt deliberately to teach the next structure along the natural order—it will be provided in just the right quantities and automatically reviewed if the student receives a sufficient amount of comprehensible input.

To be more precise, input is the essential environmental ingredient. The acquirer does not simply acquire what he hears—there is a significant contribution of the internal language processor (Chomsky's Language Acquisition Device: LAD). Not all the input the acquirer hears is processed for acquisition, and the LAD itself generates possible rules according to innate procedures. ... Moreover, not all comprehended input reaches the LAD. ...

▷ *To what extent is Krashen's Input Hypothesis a mentalist theory?*

▷ *Krashen offers no explanation here (or elsewhere) of the process by which comprehending input results in 'intake'. Can you provide one?*

▷ *It has been pointed out that if learners can comprehend input easily there is no reason for them to learn any new language from it and that it is, in fact, input that they do not understand that is important for acquisition. How might 'incomprehensible input' lead to acquisition?*

▷ *'Speaking is the result of acquisition and not its cause.' Do you agree? What counter arguments can you think of?*

Text 11

MICHAEL LONG: 'Native speaker/non-native speaker conversation in the second-language classroom' in M. Clarke and J. Handscombe (eds.): *On TESOL '82*. TESOL 1983, pages 211–12

Like Krashen, Long views comprehensible input as the source of acquisition. However, he differs from Krashen in emphasizing one particular way of achieving comprehensible input—meaning negotiation.

... there is a logical problem with the idea that changing the input will aid *acquisition*. If removal from the input of structures and lexical items the learner does not understand is what is involved in making speech comprehensible, how does the learner ever advance? Where is the input at the i + 1 that is to appear in the learner's competence at the next stage of development?

Clearly, there must be other ways in which input is made comprehensible than modifying the input itself. One way, as Krashen, Hatch and others have argued, is by use of the linguistic and extralinguistic context to fill in the gaps, just as NSs have been shown to do when the incoming speech signal is inadequate ... . Another way, as in caretaker speech, is through orienting even adult-adult NS-NNS conversation to the 'here and now' ... . A third, more consistently used method is modifying not the input itself, but the *interactional structure of conversation* through such devices as self- and other-repetition, confirmation and comprehension checks and clarification requests. ...

Two pieces of evidence suggest that this third way of making input comprehensible is the most important and most widely used of all. First, all studies which have looked at this dimension of NS-NNS conversation have found statistically significant modifications from NS-NS norms. Interactional modifications, in other words, are pervasive. Second, interactional modifications are found in NS-NNS conversation even when input modifications are not or are few and minor.

▷ *Why does Long claim that simplified input (of the kind found in foreigner talk) does not assist acquisition? What evidence does he give to support this claim? Can you think of any counter arguments?*

▷ *Can you construct a brief example of NS–NNS conversation to illustrate how the interactional structure of a conversation is modified using one of the devices (for example, confirmation checks) that Long mentions?*

▷ *Long suggests that both a 'here and now' orientation in conversation and modifying the interactional structure assist acquisition, but he clearly favours the latter. Why do you think this is?*

Text 12

MERRILL SWAIN: 'Three functions of output in second language learning' in G. Cook and B. Seidlhofer (eds.): *Principle and Practice in Applied Linguistics*. Oxford University Press 1995, pages 125–6

Whereas Krashen sees no role for speaking in L2 acquisition, other researchers, such as Merrill Swain, consider learner output an important mechanism of acquisition.

... the output hypothesis claims that producing language serves second language acquisition in several ways. One function of producing the target language, in the sense of 'practising', is that it enhances fluency. This seems non-controversial, particularly if it is not confused with the adage that 'practice makes perfect'. We know that fluency and accuracy are different dimensions of language performance, and although practice may enhance fluency, it does not necessarily improve accuracy (Ellis 1988; Schmidt 1992).

Other functions of output in second language acquisition have been proposed that relate more to accuracy and fluency. ... First, it is hypothesized that output promotes 'noticing'. That is to say, in producing the target language (vocally or subvocally) learners may notice a gap between what they *want* to say and what they *can* say, leading them to recognize what they do not know, or know only partially. In other words, under some circumstances, the activity of producing the target language may prompt second language learners to consciously recognize some of their linguistic problems; it may bring to their attention something they need to discover about their L2 (Swain 1993). This may trigger cognitive processes which might generate linguistic knowledge that is new for learners, or which consolidate their existing knowledge (Swain and Lapkin 1994).

A second way in which producing language may serve the language learning process is through hypothesis testing. That is, producing output is one way of testing a hypothesis about comprehensibility or linguistic well-formedness. A considerable body of research and theorizing over the last two decades has suggested that output, particularly erroneous output, can often be an indication that a learner has formulated a hypothesis about how the language works, and is testing it out. ... Sometimes this output invokes feedback which can lead learners to modify or 'reprocess' their output.

Thirdly, as learners reflect upon their own target language use, their output serves a metalinguistic function, enabling them to control and internalize linguistic knowledge. My assumption at present is that there is theoretical justification for considering a distinct metalinguistic function of output.

▷ *Swain distinguishes the effects of output on 'fluency' and 'accuracy'. What exactly does she mean by these terms and why is this distinction important in considering the role of output?*

▷ *Think of concrete examples to illustrate the three functions of output that Swain proposes.*

▷ *What arguments might Krashen use to combat Swain's claims regarding the role of output in L2 acquisition?*

Text 13

RICHARD DONATO: 'Collective scaffolding in second language learning' in J. Lantolf and G. Appel (eds.): *Vygotskian Approaches to Second Language Research*. Ablex 1994, pages 44–5

Donato documents ways in which learners talking among themselves are able to 'scaffold' knowledge which beforehand none of them possessed. His research draws on Vygotsky's ideas about the role of interpersonal interaction in learning (see page 48 in the Survey).

A1 Speaker 1 ... and then I'll say ... *tu as souvenu notre anniversaire de marriage* ... or should I say *mon anniversaire*?
A2 Speaker 2 *Tu as* ...
A3 Speaker 3 *Tu as* ...

A4 Speaker 1 *Tu as souvenu* ... 'you remembered?'
A5 Speaker 3 Yea, but isn't that reflexive? *Tu t'as* ...
A6 Speaker 1 Ah, *tu t'as souvenu.*
A7 Speaker 2 Oh, it's *tu es*
A8 Speaker 1 *Tu es*
A9 Speaker 3 *tu es, tu es, tu* ...
A10 Speaker 1 *T'es, tu t'es*
A11 Speaker 3 *tu t'es*
A12 Speaker 1 *Tu t'es souvenu.*

Protocol A is an attempt to render 'you remembered' into French. The compound past tense formation of reflective [*sic*] verbs in French presents complex linguistic processing, since students are required to choose the auxiliary *être* instead of *avoir*, select the correct reflexive pronoun to agree with the subject, form the past participle, which in this case is an unpredictable form, and decide if, and how, the past participle will be marked for agreement with the subject. ...

... no student alone possesses the ability to construct the French past compound tense of the reflexive verb 'to remember'. Each student appears to control only a specific aspect of the desired construction. Speaker 1, for example, produces the correct past participle (A1) but the incorrect auxiliary verb. Speaker 2 recognizes the verb as reflexive (A5) but fails to select the appropriate auxiliary *être*. Speaker 3, on the other hand, understands the choice of the auxiliary for reflexive compound past tense forms but does not include the correct reflexive pronoun into his version of the utterance (A7). At this point in the interaction Speakers 1 and 2 synthesize the prior knowledge that has been externalized during the interaction and simultaneously arrive at the correct construction (A9–A12).

The interesting point here is that these three learners are able to construct collectively a scaffold for each other's performance.

▷ *Donato shows how a particular utterance can be socially constructed. What else is needed to show that this results in L2 acquisition?*

▷ *Donato's protocol illustrates the 'negotiation of form' rather than the 'negotiation of meaning'. If he is right and such interactions can contribute to acquisition what changes need to be made to the input and interaction hypotheses?*

▷ *How does Donato's notion of 'scaffolding' differ from Swain's output hypothesis?*

Chapter 6
Psycholinguistic aspects of interlanguage

Text 14

ERIC KELLERMAN: 'Now you see it, now you don't' in S. Gass and L. Selinker (eds.): *Language Transfer in Language Learning*. Newbury House 1983, pages 113–4

Kellerman considers two constraints on language transfer. The first he refers to as the 'perception of language distance' or the learner's 'psychotypology'. The second constraint concerns the learner's perceptions of the markedness of an L1 structure.

I want now to examine one factor that will act as a *constrainer* or a *trigger* of transfer. This is the learner's notion of the relations between the L1 and L2. [I have suggested] that general typological closeness of L1 to L2 would be capitalized on by learners as a result of a relatively immediate opportunity to identify cognate forms and structures across the two languages. As a natural by-product of this opportunity to make these associations, one would anticipate both facilitation and interference. However, certain interference errors would be resistant to eradication, particularly in environments of minimal linguistic difference. ... Conversely, if L1 and L2 were very different, the lack of available correspondences would, in the initial stages at least, act as a bar to transfer, since the learner is unable to make the necessary cross-lingual tie-ups.

▷ *What languages do you consider 'typologically close' and 'typologically distant' to your own language?*

▷ *Can you think of any forms or structures in your L1 that you would anticipate could be cognate with the forms and structures in a typologically close language?*

Earlier I suggested that any occurrence of linguistic equivalence between L1 and L2, which thus provides the potential for transfer between L1 and L2, will nevertheless not guarantee that facilitation will take place, since L1-induced constraints may act to limit theoretically possible IL forms to an attested subset. The exact nature of what does constitute this subset will, as I have already indicated, depend not only on what I have called the learner's psychotypology but also on a second constraining factor, the *transferability* of the L1 structure, that is, the probability with which this structure will be transferred relative to other structures in the L1. Transferability is to be seen as a theoretical notion, which derives from native speakers' own perception of the structure of their language. If a feature is perceived as infrequent, irregular, semantically or structurally opaque, or in any other way exceptional, what we could in other words call 'psycholinguistically marked', then its transferability will be inversely proportional to its degree of markedness. ... It is important to emphasize that the relative transferability of structures is determined by the L1 and is thus independent of the nature of the L2, though they [*sic*] will interact with the learner's perception of the L1–L2 distance.

▷ *Can you identify structures in your L1 which you perceive to be 'unmarked' and thus potentially transferable?*

▷ *What about structures in your L1 that you perceive as 'marked'?*

▷ *How might the two constraining factors Kellerman considers (i.e. (1) the learner's perception of the L1–L2 distance and (2) the relative transferability of structures) interact?*

Text 15

RICHARD SCHMIDT: 'The role of consciousness in second language learning' in *Applied Linguistics* 11, 1990, pages 129-30

Krashen views 'acquisition' (as opposed to 'learning') as a subconscious process. This text discusses different positions relating to the role of consciousness in L2 acquisition.

One of the more controversial issues in applied linguistics concerns the role of conscious and unconscious processes in second language learning. On the one hand, there are many who believe that conscious understanding of the target language system is necessary if learners are to produce correct forms and use them appropriately. In this view, errors are the result of not knowing the rules of the target language, forgetting them, or not paying attention. There is little theoretical support for the most traditional form of this view; no current theory posits the conscious study of grammar as either a necessary or sufficient condition for language learning. ...

Others firmly believe that language learning is essentially unconscious. Seliger has claimed that 'obviously, it is at the unconscious level that language learning takes place' (Seliger 1983: 187). Krashen (1981, 1983, 1985) has elaborated a theory that rests on a distinction between two independent processes, genuine learning, called 'acquisition', which is subconscious, and conscious 'learning', which is of little use in actual language production and comprehension. ...

A third commonly held position is that the issue of consciousness should be avoided altogether in a theory of language acquisition. McLaughlin, Rossman and McLeod (1983) argue against Krashen's 'learning-acquisition' distinction because it rests on what they consider to be the unsupportable distinction between conscious and unconscious knowledge. In a recent discussion of explicit and implicit knowledge, Odlin recommends divorcing these concepts from the 'notoriously slippery notion of "consciousness" ' (Odlin 1986: 138).

▷ *Schmidt outlines three positions regarding the role of consciousness in L2 acquisition. Which position is compatible with a Vygotskian theory of L2 acquisition? Which position do you think Swain adopts?*

▷ *Which one do you favour? Why?*

Text 16

CLAUS FÆRCH and GABRIELE KASPER: 'Plans and strategies in foreign language communication' in C. Færch and G. Kasper (eds.): *Strategies in Interlanguage Communication*. Longman 1983, pages 36–7

This text considers how to classify communication strategies.

A first broad categorization of communication strategies can be made on the basis of two fundamentally different ways in which learners might behave when faced with problems in communication. Learners can either solve such problems by adopting *avoidance behaviour*, trying to do away with the problem, normally by changing the communicative goal, or by relying on *achievement behaviour*, attempting to tackle the problem directly by developing an alternative plan. On the basis of these two different approaches to problem-solving, we can draw a distinction between two major types of strategies: *reduction strategies*, governed by avoidance behaviour, and *achievement strategies* governed by achievement behaviour.

▷ *Can you think of examples of reduction and achievement communication strategies?*

▷ *One of the achievement strategies Færch and Kasper mention is 'transfer'. What is the difference between 'transfer' as a communication strategy and as a learning process? How might these two types of transfer be distinguished?*

▷ *Færch and Kasper suggest that only achievement strategies are likely to promote L2 acquisition. What do you think their reasoning is? Do you agree?*

Chapter 7
Linguistic aspects of interlanguage

Text 17

MICHAEL LONG: 'Maturational constraints on language development' in *Studies in Second Language Acquisition* 12, 1990, pages 273–4

It has been suggested that there are critical periods that govern when learners are able to achieve native-speaker competence in an L2. This text considers the duration of these critical periods for different aspects of language.

Contrary to recent assertions in the literature, there is growing evidence that maturational constraints are at work in SL learning, and that they are not confined to phonology. Studies showing an initial rate advantage for adults over children and for older over younger children in early syntax and morphology should be interpreted as just that—a short-lived rate advantage. They do not show that older children or adults are better learners. On the contrary, starting after age 6 appears to make it impossible for many learners (and after age 12 for the remainder) to achieve native-like competence in phonology; starting later than the early teens, more precisely after age 15, seems to create the same problems in morphology and syntax. Preliminary results suggest that similar generalizations will eventually be found to hold for lexis and collocation, and for certain discourse and pragmatic abilities.

While the superior long-term achievement of younger learners is consistent with the notion of maturational constraints on most dimensions of SLA, the apparent inability of older learners to attain native-like proficiency if they begin after a certain age further suggests that there is a sensitive period for learning. The precise limits of this period are still unclear. The available data suggest, however, that exposure needs to occur before age 6 to guarantee that an SL phonology can become native-like (given sufficient opportunity) before age 15 if the morphology and syntax are to be native-like, and somewhere between those ages for the remaining linguistic domains. That is to say, there is probably not just one sensitive period for SLA, but several: one for phonology, one for morpho-syntax, and so on. No doubt, as with sensitive periods in many aspects of human and other animal development, there is some overlap due to the relationships among sub-systems across linguistic domains, and some variation across individuals.

The easiest way to falsify such claims would be to produce learners who have demonstrably attained native-like proficiency despite having begun exposure well after the closure of the hypothesized sensitive periods.

▷ *Why do you think older children and adults enjoy 'a short-lived advantage' over children in learning an L2?*

▷ *What explanations can you offer for the failure of adults to achieve native-like competence in an L2?*

▷ *What explanation can you give for the existence of different sensitive periods for phonology and morpho-syntax?*

▷ *Do you know any L2 learners who began learning as adults but have achieved native-like proficiency?*

Text 18

LYDIA WHITE: 'Second language acquisition and universal grammar' in *Studies in Second Language Acquisition* 12, 1990, pages 127–8

In this text White considers how researchers can set about investigating whether Universal Grammar (UG) is still available in L2 acquisition.

It is not sufficient to point to general differences between L1 and L2 acquisition to argue for non-availability of UG, or to general similarities to argue for its availability. UG is a claim about knowledge in a particular domain, a claim that our knowledge of language is constrained by certain abstract but crucial principles. Therefore, the potential availability of UG in L2 acquisition must be investigated within this same domain. If UG is no longer available to adults, and second language acquisition proceeds by means of general cognitive abilities, L2 learners should not be able to work out abstract properties of the L2 which are underdetermined by the input data. Where the input is insufficiently precise to allow L2 learners to induce the relevant properties of the grammar, they should not be able to achieve full success. Thus, one form of evidence for the hypothesis that UG operates in L2 acquisition will be evidence that L2 learners in fact attain the kind of complex and subtle knowledge which is attributable to UG.

However, L1 knowledge is a confounding factor. If a particular principle of UG operates in both the L1 and L2, and if L2 learners show evidence of observing this principle, this could be attributed to transfer of L1 knowledge. Similarly, if L2 learners show evidence of applying L1 parameter settings to the L2, this is actually neutral concerning the availability or non-availability of UG. Thus, the strongest arguments in favor of the operation of UG (complete or partial) in L2 acquisition will be made in cases where effects of the L1 can be minimized.

In order to eliminate the L1 as a source of UG-like knowledge, two situations can be isolated, one relevant to the operation of principles and the other relevant to parameters. In the case of principles, if UG is not available, then L2 learners should *not* be able to sort out aspects of the L2 where both of the following hold:

a some principle operates in the L2 but not the L1, and
b the input underdetermines the L2 grammar.

Similarly, in the case of parameters, L2 learners should not be able to acquire the L2 value of a parameter where:

a the L1 and L2 have different values for some parameter, and
b the input underdetermines the L2 grammar.

If L2 learners successfully arrive at the relevant properties of the L2 under such conditions, then there is support for the claim that UG is still truly accessible, rather than inaccessible or weakly accessible only via the L1.

▷ *What do you think White means by 'general differences between L1 and L2 acquisition'? Can you give examples? Why are these not sufficient to demonstrate the non-existence of UG in L2 acquisition?*

▷ *In what way is the L1 'a confounding factor' in investigating the availability of UG in L2 acquisition? What is White's solution to this problem?*

▷ *What does White mean by 'the input underdetermines the L2 grammar'? Why is it necessary to investigate grammatical properties where this is the case?*

Chapter 8
Individual differences in L2 acquisition

Text 19

PETER SKEHAN: *Individual Differences in Second-language Learning*. Edward Arnold 1989, page 37

Skehan argues that different types of language aptitude may be involved in different types of language processing.

The major point is to connect this aptitude research with contemporary linguistics. Although most linguists aim at the parsimonious and elegant description of language structure, this view has recently come under some attack. In terms of *acquisition*, Peters (1983) proposes that the units of the linguist need not be, and are not likely to be, the units of the language learner. Learners, she proposes, frequently operate with chunks of language on an 'analyse only if you have to' principle. These chunks could potentially (in linguistic terms) be related to one another and therefore stored and produced more economically, but a language user (or learner) will not necessarily carry out such analyses if (a) the separate chunks function effectively in conveying the meanings intended, and (b) the learner is equipped with a memory system which can tolerate this inefficiency and redundancy. ...

The aptitude research seems to embrace both the linguistic and the 'chunking' viewpoints, however, suggesting two different *orientations* to language development—one linguistic, and one memory-based. One type of learner seems to have a language learning orientation which stresses the analysability of language while the other, perhaps more expression-oriented, is more apt to rely on chunks of language and efficient memory. ... What the aptitude research may have been reflecting is the existence of two contrasting orientations to language and language learning.

▷ *What exactly are the 'two contrasting orientations to language and language learning' that Skehan has in mind?*

▷ *Look back at the description of the components of language aptitude in the Survey (page 74). Can you relate the components to the two orientations Skehan refers to?*

▷ *What is your own orientation to language learning?*

Text 20

GRAHAM CROOKES and RICHARD SCHMIDT: 'Motivation: Reopening the research agenda' in *Language Learning* 41, 1991, page 480

In this text, the case for what is referred to as 'intrinsic motivation' (see page 76 in the Survey) is put, particularly where language teaching is involved.

We have referred to the invalidity of SL treatments of motivation in terms of their distance from everyday, nontechnical concepts of what it means to be motivated. When teachers say that a student is motivated, they are not usually concerning themselves with the student's reasons for studying, but are observing that the student does study, or at least engage in teacher-desired behavior in the classroom and possibly outside it. Most teachers wish to motivate students ... and attempt to do so in a variety of ways, of which altering attitudes to the subject matter is just one. In general, it is probably fair to say that teachers would describe a student as motivated if he or she becomes productively engaged in learning tasks, and sustains that engagement, without the need for continual encouragement or direction. They are more concerned with motivation than affect. This teacher-validated use of the term motivation has not been adopted by SL investigators, but it is very close to the concept of motivation that has been substantially explored outside SLA, particularly in social and educational psychology.

▷ *Crookes and Schmidt are reacting to the socio-psychological view of motivation prevalent in second language research. What is this view? (see Survey pages 75–6).*

▷ *What alternative view of motivation do Crookes and Schmidt offer?*

▷ *Can you suggest some of the ways in which teachers attempt to motivate their students other than 'altering attitudes to the subject'?*

Text 21

REBECCA OXFORD: *Language Learning Strategies: What Every Teacher Should Know*. Newbury House 1990, pages 8–9

Learners employ learning strategies to assist them in their attempts to learn an L2. This text identifies different types of learning strategies.

All appropriate language learning strategies are oriented toward the broad goal of communicative competence. Development of communicative competence requires realistic interaction among learners using meaningful, contextualized language. Learning

strategies help learners participate actively in such authentic communication. Such strategies operate in both general and specific ways to encourage the development of communicative competence.

It is easy to see how language learning strategies stimulate the growth of communicative competence *in general*. For instance, metacognitive ('beyond the cognitive') strategies help learners to regulate their own cognition and to focus, plan, and evaluate their progress as they move toward communicative competence. Affective strategies develop the self-confidence and perseverance needed for learners to involve themselves actively in language learning, a requirement for attaining communicative competence. Social strategies provide increased interaction and more empathetic understanding, two qualities necessary to reach communicative competence. Certain cognitive strategies, such as analyzing, and particular memory strategies, like the keyword technique, are highly useful for understanding and recalling new information—important functions in the process of becoming competent in using the new language. Compensation strategies aid learners in overcoming knowledge gaps and continuing to communicate authentically; thus, these strategies help communicative competence to blossom.

▷ *What are the different kinds of learning strategies Oxford mentions? Try to write a clear definition of each type and to give an example of each.*

▷ *Think about how you would perform a real-life task in a foreign language (for example, complaining about your room to the manager of a hotel). What specific learning strategies might you use in this task? Try to classify them according to Oxford's general types.*

Chapter 9

Instruction and L2 acquisition

Text 22

PATSY LIGHTBOWN: 'Getting quality input in the second/foreign language classroom' in C. Kramsch and S. McConnell-Ginet (eds.): *Text and Context: Cross-Disciplinary Perspectives on Language Study*. D.C. Heath and Company 1991, pages 192–3

In this extract, Lightbown describes two experimental studies involving form-focused instruction which she carried out with Lydia White, Nina Spada, and Leila Ranta.

In two experimental studies, we provided teachers in the intensive ESL classes (in Quebec) with teaching materials focusing on two aspects of English that the learners were far from mastering. The aim of these studies was to explore the effect of introducing more correct examples of target language structures together with some focused instruction and corrective feedback so that learners could see how their interlanguage differed from target language rules.

In the first, we asked some intensive program teachers to teach students that, even though adverb placement in English is relatively free, there is one position where English does not normally allow adverbs in simple sentences: between the verb and direct object. Note that this is not the case in French, where this position is allowed.

* Mary buys often flowers for her mother.
Marie achète souvent des fleurs pour sa mère.

After two weeks (approximately nine hours of instruction), of relatively brief daily activities involving both 'consciousness raising' (through the presentation of examples, corrective feedback on error) and communicative activities where adverbs were used, students in the experimental group were dramatically better than a control group who had not had these lessons. ... Five weeks later they were still performing with a high level of accuracy. One year later, however, they had slipped back to a level not significantly different from the pretest performance. ...

In the second experimental study we prepared instructional packages for the teachers on the formation of English questions, both *yes/no* and *wh* types. French has a large variety of ways to form grammatical questions. French-speaking learners of English might be expected to assume, once they identify some of the English question forms that both French and English permit, that English has the same range of questions (with the same pragmatic force) as French.

The design of the study was similar to that of the adverb study reported above. The instruction included consciousness raising and communicative activities with opportunities for teachers to provide corrective feedback. And the results of the study were somewhat similar. That is, students performed significantly better after instruction than before instruction on a variety of tasks—oral and written—in which they either produced questions or indicated which of two questions was more correct (or whether both were equally correct or incorrect). The difference was that, six months later, the students were still improving. Their accuracy in using questions and in judging the grammaticality of questions had not slipped back to pre-instruction levels.

▷ *What do the two experiments that Lightbown describes show about the effectiveness of instruction?*

▷ *Why do you think the effects of instruction wore off in the case of adverb position?*

▷ *Why do you think the effects of instruction proved durable in the case of question formation?*

▷ *How could you test your ideas?*

Text 23

FRED ECKMAN, LAWRENCE BELL, and DIANE NELSON: 'On the generalization of relative clause instruction in the acquisition of English as a second language' in *Applied Linguistics* 9, 1988, pages 3 and 8–10

Here is an account of a study that investigated whether L2 learners can generalize knowledge about marked grammatical structures to linked unmarked structures (see page 83 of the Survey).

This paper reports an experimental study intended to test the generalization of instruction in second language learning. A group of students in an English as a second language program served as subjects for special instruction in relative clause formation. The subjects were given a pre-test on combining two sentences into one sentence containing a relative clause where either the subject, object, or object of preposition was the relativized noun phrase. Based on the pre-test results, four equal groups were formed, three of which served as experimental groups and one as the control group. Each experimental group was given instruction on the formation of only one type of relative clause. The subjects were then given a post-test. ...

Each of the pre- and post-tests was scored on the basis of whether or not the student produced the correct target sentence. Only errors relevant to the formation of the target relative clause were counted. ...

... the majority of errors involved the structure of the relative clause itself. A frequent error type was the insertion of a resumptive pronoun in the position from which the NP was relativized. Another error type involved the failure to delete the relativized NP from its original, pre-relativized position. These errors are shown in (a) and (b) respectively:

a Target: Joan read the book that Martin sold to Bill.
Error: Joan read the book that Martin sold it to Bill.

b Target: The teacher found the paper that Alex threw in the trash can.
Error: The teacher found the paper that Alex threw the paper in the trash can.

... The number of errors per group, broken down by relative clause structure, for both the pre- and post-test are shown in the Table.

Pre-test				Post-test		
	Subj. str.	Obj. str.	OP str.	Subj. str.	Obj. str.	OP str.
Subject group	34	36	42	4	25	38
Object Group	32	32	42	10	12	38
Direct object group	35	39	42	0	4	1
Control group	27	30	42	23	30	42

TABLE 10: *Number of errors per group by relative clause structure*

- ▷ *What do Eckman et al. mean by 'generalization of instruction'?*
- ▷ *Why are relative clauses an appropriate grammatical structure to test whether 'generalization of instruction' takes place?*
- ▷ *What do the results shown in the Table show about the effects of the instruction?*
- ▷ *What are the implications of this study for teaching?*
- ▷ *Do you find this study convincing or do you have some reservations?*

Chapter 10
Conclusion: multiple perspectives in SLA

Text 24

KEVIN GREGG: 'Second language acquisition theory: a case for a generative perspective' in S. Gass and J. Schachter (eds.): *Linguistic Perspectives on Second Language Acquisition.* Cambridge University Press 1989, pages 31 and 35

There is a debate in SLA about the role of theory. Should SLA strive for a single theory that can guide a program of research? Or should it accept a proliferation of theories? Here is one view.

Actually, in the absence of a formal theory, we get not only informal description, but also a proliferation of terminology, either produced ad hoc ('creative construction', Krashen's 'output filter', Tarone's 'capability continuum', the various 'competences', etc.; my favorite invention is 'semantic clout') or imported unthinkingly from other disciplines; added to this are a lot of flow charts and diagrams. In the absence of a theory we run the risk of getting mired in sterile taxonomies that, however plausible or locally useful, are not constrained by any principle. ...

... Although there is a great deal of SLA research going on, what is much harder to find is a research *program*. In SLA research in general, there has been little sense of an overall guiding purpose beyond the general one of finding out things.

- ▷ *Why do you think terminology proliferated in SLA? Do you think Gregg is right to criticize this?*
- ▷ *What does Gregg mean by 'a research program'? Do you think he is right to complain that this has been missing from SLA?*
- ▷ *Of the various perspectives on SLA you have examined in this book (sociolinguistic, discourse, psycholinguistic, linguistic, individual differences, pedagogic) which one do think is best equipped to provide SLA with 'an overall guiding purpose'?*