

Chapter 1 Introduction to SLA

1. SLA and key terms

1.1 Second languages are any language other than the learner's native language or mother tongue; non-primary languages; Multilingualism;

1.2 SLA: the acquisition of the non-primary languages other than the first language

1.3 Acquisition vs. learning

Krashen (1981): acquisition refers to the subconscious process of picking up a language through exposure; learning refers to the conscious process of studying a language.

1.4 Second vs. foreign language acquisition

- Setting where the language plays no major role in the community and is primarily learnt only in the classroom
- What is learnt and how it is learnt
- Umbrella/cover term: SLA

1.5 Naturalistic vs. instructed SLA

- Whether the language is learnt through communication that takes place in naturally occurring social situations or through study, with the help of "guidance" from reference books or classroom instruction
- Klein (1986): psycholinguistic distinction—spontaneous vs guided

When learners focus on communication in naturalistic SLA and thus learn incidentally; in instructed SLA the learner typically focuses on some aspect of the language system

A socio-linguistic distinction: reflecting the settings and activities in which learners typically participate

Naturalistic learning subconscious and instructed learning conscious?

1.6 Competence vs. performance

Chomsky (1965)

- Competence consists of mental representations of linguistic rules that constitute the speaker-hearer's internal grammar. Implicit; evidence in intuitions about grammaticality of sentences
- Performance consists of the use of this grammar in the comprehension and production of language.

1.7 Usage vs. use

Widdowson (1978)

- Usage is that aspect of performance which makes evident the extent to which the language user demonstrates his knowledge of linguistic rules; whether the learner masters the formal properties of the phonological, lexical and grammatical systems

- Use is that aspect of performance which makes evidence the extent to which the language user demonstrates his ability to use his knowledge of linguistic rules for effective communication; how learners convey meaning through the process of constructing discourse
2. The place of Second Language in the world today
 - 1). Your own SL experience
 - 2). Bilingualism/Multilingualism of today's world

Multilingualism refers to the ability to use two or more languages.

G. Richard Tucker (1999: 1)

There are many more bilingual or multilingual individuals in the world than there are monolingual. In addition, there are many more children throughout the world who have been and continue to be educated through a second or a later-acquired language, at least for some portion of their formal education, than there are children educated exclusively via the first language.
 - 3). Bilingual education programs; Immersion programs; Formal school settings
 - 4). SL in the world: immigration; conference; collaborations; cooperation;
 3. Why study SLA?
 - 1). Fascinating in its own right: multi-disciplinary subject;
 - 2). As a source of insight into the teaching/learning process:

Corder (1981): 'efficient language teaching must work with, rather than against, natural processes, facilitate rather than impede learning.'

However, no assurance guaranteed.
 - 3). Facilitates SLers' attempts at language learning
 - 4). Language intervention: mentally retarded individuals; language therapy
 4. Development of the SLA research
 - 4.1 Post-war; since 1950s: three phases
 - 1950s-1960s Adjunct to the practical business of language teaching; however, well-established idea that language teaching methods had to be justified in terms of an underlying learning theory
 - Language pedagogy at that time: structuralism developed by Palmer in 1920s and by Fries in 1940s

Summarized by Howatt (1988: 14-15)

1. the conviction that language systems consisted of a finite set of 'patterns' or 'structures' which acted as models ... for the production of an infinite number of

similarly constructed sentences;

2. the belief that repetition and practice resulted in the formation of accurate and fluent foreign language habits.

3. a methodology which set out to teach 'the basics' before encouraging learners to communicate their own thoughts and ideas

- Governed by the mainstream psychology at the time—behaviorism (Watson 1924; Thorndike 1932; Bloomfield 1933; Skinner 1957)

Language learning is seen like any other kind of learning, as the formation of habits. ; Learning of any kind of behavior as being based on the notions of stimulus and response

Behaviorism in L1A and SLA

Learning new habits; replacing well-established responses in our mother tongue with a set of new ones

Implications on teaching: Contrastive Analysis

Difference-diffculty

Fries (1945)

The most effective materials are those that are based upon a scientific description of the language to be learned, carefully compared with a parallel description of the native language of the learner.

- Behaviorism under attack

Skinner 1957 *Verbal Behavior* vs. Chomsky 1959 review of skinner's book

Two arguments:

- (1). Creativity of language: children can create new sentences that they have never learnt before.
- (2). Plato's problem: Given the complexity and abstractness of linguistic rules, it is amazing that children are able to master them so quickly and efficiently, especially given the limited input they receive.

Claim: innate faculty

Has most influence in L1 acquisition

4.2 1970s

- SLA

- (1). Under such a background: CA not effective: differences not = difficulty;

similarities not = easy

(2). Evidence from L1 acquisition

Error Analysis (Corder 1967)

Errors not all from first language

Where do the errors come from?

Learner-internal in origin

➔ An interest in overall character of the second language system

Selinker (1972) interlanguage

4.3 The 1980s and beyond: a much more autonomous field of inquiry, with distinctive theoretical orientations and methodologies

5. General questions in SLA research

1). What exactly does the L2 learner know?

Guided much early research (late 1960s and 1970s)

Motivated by the recognition: learners often failed initially to produce correct sentences and instead displayed language that was markedly deviant from target language norms

Descriptive in nature

2). How does the learners acquire this knowledge?

Why learners made errors, why their language displayed marked regularities, why it changed systemically over time

Two factors: external factors: social situations and how the language the learner was exposed to

Internal factors: mental processes

e.g make use of existing knowledge to internalize knowledge of the L2

3). Why are some learners more successful than others?

6. Frameworks for study of SLA

2.3 Frameworks for study of SLA			
Timeline	Linguistic (Chapter 3)	Psychological (Chapter 4)	Social (Chapter 5)
1950s and before	Structuralism	Behaviorism	Sociocultural Theory
1960s	Transformational-Generative Grammar	Neurolinguistics Information Processing	Ethnography of Communication Variation Theory
1970s	Functionalism	Humanistic models	Acculturation Theory Accommodation Theory
1980s	Principles and Parameters Model	Connectionism	Social Psychology
1990s	Minimalist Program	Processability	

6.1 linguistic perspectives:

Two foci

- internal focus: N. Chomsky; behaviorist theory of language learning as wrong; necessity of an innate capacity which is biologically endowed; TG→PP→MP;
- external focus: Functionalism: emphasizing information content of utterances and language primarily as system of communication; some emphasize acquisition as largely a process of mapping relations between linguistic functions and forms, motivated by communicative needs

6.2 psychological perspectives

- language and the brain: location and representation of language in the brain; neurolinguistics; Lenneburg 1967: critical period; brain surgery; modern noninvasive imaging techniques
- learning processes: influenced by computer-based Information-Processing (IP) model of learning; L2 as a highly complex skill; learning L2 as essentially unlike learning other highly complex skills; how learners acquire knowledge of L2; Processability: extends IP concepts of learning and applies them to teaching second languages; Connectionism: focusing on learning processes; not considering language learning to involve either innate knowledge or abstraction of rules and principles, but rather to result from increasing strength of associations (connections) between stimuli and responses; frequency of input as an important causative factor in learning

- learner differences: why some learners are more successful than others; considering emotional involvement in learning ,such as affective factors of attitude, motivation, and anxiety level

6.3 social perspectives: emphasizing the importance of social context for language acquisition and use

- microsocial: relate to language acquisition and use in immediate social contexts of production, interpretation and interaction;
- macrosocial: relate language acquisition and use to broader ecological contexts, including cultural political and educational settings

2.4 Perspectives, foci, and frameworks		
Perspective	Focus	Framework
Linguistic	Internal	Transformational-Generative Grammar Principles and Parameters Model Minimalist Program
	External	Functionalism
	Languages and the brain	Neurolinguistics
Psychological	Learning processes	Information Processing Processability Connectionism
	Individual differences	Humanistic models
Social	Microsocial	Variation Theory Accommodation Theory Sociocultural Theory
	Macrosocial	Ethnography of Communication Acculturation Theory Social Psychology

● My personal understanding of SLA research

Focus on linguistics			Focus on learner
Description	Explanation		
Area 1 Characteristics of learner language	Area 2 Learner-external factors	Area 3 Learner-internal factors	Area 4 Language learner
Errors	Social context	L1 transfer	General factors e.g. motivation
Acquisition order and development sequences	Input and interaction	Learning processes	Learning strategies
Variability		Communication strategies	
Pragmatic features		Knowledge of linguistic universals (innate language faculty)	

7. A glimpse at L2 data and research methodology

L2 data (Please refer to Chapter 3 (Gass & Selinker 2008))

- Linguistic information vs. non-linguistic information

Non-linguistic information: attitude, motivation, learning styles, personality characteristics; questionnaires, interviews, diaries

7.1 Data analysis & Data interpretation

Practice:

- Describe the interlanguage patterns of plural usage in the following data
- What are the possible interlanguage generalizations to account for such patterns?

Three adult native speakers of Arabic; intermediate to advanced speakers of English; shortly after they had arrived in the US; compositions and conversations

- (1). There are also two deserts.
- (2). I bought a couple of towel.
- (3). So, when I like to park my car, there is no place to put it, and how many ticket I took.
- (4). There is many kind of way you make baklawas.
- (5). The streets run from east to west, this avenues from north to south.
- (6). I go to university four days a week.

- (7). Just a few month he will finish from his studies.
- (8). Egypt shares its boundaries with the Mediterranean.
- (9). There is a lot of mosquito.
- (10). Many people have ideas about Jeddah and other cities located in Saudi Arabia.
- (11). When he complete nine month...
- (12). He can spend 100 years here in America.
- (13). There are about one and half-million inhabitant in Jeddah.
- (14). How many month or years have been in his mind?
- (15). There are many tents—and goats running around.
- (16). How many hour?
- (17). There are more than 200,000 telephone lines.
- (18). Every country had three or four kind of bread.

Categorization (English-like; non-English-like; ambiguous)

Hypotheses

- (1). *Whenever there is a quantifying phrase or a non-numerical quantifying word before the noun, there is no overt marking on the plural of that noun.* (only for the non-English-like data) → no.13? (a phrase?)
- (2). *Mark all plural nouns with /s/ except those that are preceded by a quantifying phrases or a non-numerical quantifying word*
 Exceptions:
 no. 11? Pronunciation simplification
 no. 14: a problem in initial categorization; learner might create a rule that relates plural marking to conjunction
 no. 10: possibly ambiguous; 'irrelevant' as an unanalyzed chunk, learners may conceptualize it as a plural;

Looking back:

- combination of spoken and written data might be a problem (data of only one dimension)
- pooled data might be a problem. (individual data)
- exceptions are as important as the bulk of data
- where there is still uncertainty, what further data should be included?

7.2 Types of data

Context in which data are collected: classroom data vs. naturalistic data

Two types of performances: actual speech data vs. reaction to TL data

Longitudinal vs. cross-sectional

	Longitudinal	Cross-sectional
Number of subjects and time frame of data collection	Case study; prolonged period of time	?
Amount of descriptive detail	Detail on a learner's speech	?
Type of data	Spontaneous speech	?
Type of analysis	Descriptive qualitative comments or narrative expositions	?
Mostly used in	Developmental trends; interpreting various social constraints and input influence	?
Drawbacks	Time; lack of generalizability; knowing no more than what they have produced;	?

7.3 Data elicitation

Choice of data-collection procedure: relationship between a research question and research methodology

Example: how non-native English speakers learn to apologize in English?

- (1). Gathering learners' instances of apologizing in either controlled experiment or in a naturalistic setting
- (2). Cross-sectional; set up a situation and ask large groups of learners what to say

Eliciting speech data

Eliciting reaction data