

## CHAPTER

# 5 Social Contexts of Second Language Acquisition

## CHAPTER PREVIEW

### KEY TERMS

*Communicative competence*  
*Language community*  
*Foreigner talk*  
*Direct correction*  
*Indirect correction*  
*Interaction*  
*Hypothesis*  
*Symbolic mediation*  
*Interpersonal interaction*  
*Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)*  
*Scaffolding*  
*Intrapersonal interaction*  
*Acculturation*  
*Additive bilingualism*  
*Subtractive bilingualism*

When we talk about *what* is being acquired in SLA, it is not enough just to talk about the language itself. We must also include the social and cultural knowledge embedded in the language being learned that is required for appropriate language use. What must L2 learners know and be able to do in order to communicate effectively? Part of this knowledge involves different ways of categorizing objects and events and expressing experiences. But an important part involves learners understanding their own and others' roles as members of groups or communities with sociopolitical as well as linguistic bounds. What difference does group membership and identity make in regard to *what* is learned, *how* it is acquired, and *why* some learners are more successful than others? In this chapter, we focus attention on two levels of context that affect language learning: the **microsocial** and the **macrosocial**. The microsocial focus deals with the potential effects of different immediately surrounding circumstances, while the macrosocial focus relates SLA to broader cultural, political, and educational environments.

## Communicative Competence

From a social perspective, the notion of **linguistic competence** which was introduced in [Chapter 1](#) is inadequate to account for what is being acquired in any language that is going to be used for communicative purposes. Dell Hymes ([1966](#)), in establishing the framework for a field he called the **Ethnography of Communication**, made a critical observation that speakers who can produce any and all of the grammatical sentences of a language (which satisfies Chomsky's [1965](#) definition of "competence") would be institutionalized if they indiscriminately went about trying to do so. The concept of **communicative competence** became a basic tenet in the then-emerging field of sociolinguistics, and was soon adopted as well by many specialists in the field of SLA and language teaching. This term can be defined simply as "what a speaker needs to know to communicate appropriately within a particular language community" (Saville-Troike [2003](#)). It involves knowing not only the vocabulary, phonology, grammar, and other aspects of linguistic structure (although that is a critical component of knowledge) but also when to speak (or not), what to say to whom, and how to say it appropriately in any given situation. Further, it involves the social and cultural knowledge speakers are presumed to have which enables them to use and interpret linguistic forms.

The term **language community** refers to a group of people who share knowledge of a common language to at least some extent. Multilingual individuals are often members of more than one language community – generally to different degrees, and the one or ones they orient themselves to at any given moment is reflected not only in which segment of their linguistic knowledge they select, but which interaction skills they use, and which features of their cultural knowledge they activate. As we have already seen, the competence of non-native speakers of a language may differ significantly from the competence of native speakers, even as they may participate in the same or overlapping language communities. This may include structural differences in the linguistic system, different rules for usage in writing or conversation, and even somewhat divergent meanings for the "same" lexical forms. Further, a multilingual speaker's total communicative competence differs from that of a monolingual in including knowledge of rules for the appropriate choice of language and for switching between languages, given a particular social context and communicative purpose.

The steadily increasing use of **Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC)** in L2 instruction adds even further complexities to our concepts of language community and of language function and form. Although this is a virtual community, since it is an artificial environment that is provided by computers, it is still a very real component of many L2 learners' experiences. In this instructional situation, the interactive community membership is usually limited to students who are all learners (or novices) in a common L2, but members may differ greatly from one another in L1 identity and level of L2 proficiency. There is also an expert category of

membership – usually teachers, often native L2 speakers, who can observe and support the language performance of novice members if they wish. All members are multilingual to some degree. The function of language use in this virtual setting always has some metalinguistic element (using language to learn language), but may also be to express opinions, share information, collaborate on the construction of texts, and increase solidarity with other learners. Teachers use it to enrich and diversify learning experiences, evaluate student progress, and perhaps adjust level and focus of classroom instruction. The form of language used in CMC is as complex as are its constructs of community and function. It may be oral or written, involve synchronous or delayed interaction, and call for colloquial or formal varieties of the target language. Long-range goals of L2 learning (e.g. whether for travel, business, or academic pursuits) greatly influence those variables.

Differences between monolingual and multilingual communicative competence are due in part to the different social functions of first and second language learning, and to the differences between learning language and learning culture. L1 learning for children is an integral part of their socialization into their native language community: a child's native language is normally part of his or her native culture, and thus part of the body of knowledge, attitudes, and skills which are transmitted from one generation to the next as well as a primary medium through which other aspects of culture are transmitted and through which social relations are maintained. L2 learning may be part of second culture learning and adaptation, but the relationship of SLA to social and cultural learning differs greatly with circumstances.

In discussing linguistic and psychological perspectives on SLA, we have for the most part used “second language learning” in the inclusive sense of adding another language to one’s first (or native) language, but it is important at this point to return to the distinction among **second language (SL)** learning, **foreign language (FL)** learning, and **auxiliary language (AL)** learning which was mentioned in [Chapter 2](#). This is relevant to differential considerations not only of what is being learned in the process of SLA from social perspectives, but also of how it is being learned, and of why some learners are more successful than others.

What we are here distinguishing as an **SL** is generally learned and used within the context of a language community which dominantly includes members who speak it natively; it is needed to participate in that community socially, academically, politically, and economically. Examples of SL learners would include Spanish speakers in the USA learning English, Turkish speakers in Germany learning German, or Koreans in China learning Chinese. Communicative competence in an SL thus often requires considerable knowledge of the larger community’s culture and social structure, although learners may be selective in deciding which elements they want to adopt as part of their own identity. In contrast, students learning an **FL** usually do so within the context of their own native culture, often have little opportunity to interact with members of the language community who speak the FL natively (unless they study abroad),

and typically have little opportunity (or need) to participate fully in the FL society – indeed, too often the sole reason for studying the language is that it is required for graduation. An AL is learned in a context where it will function for political or technological purposes, and when its use will generally be limited to these social domains; to the extent an AL is required at all for face-to-face interaction, it is likely to be used in linguistically diverse settings which require participants to make use of a common language code for a restricted range of social functions. Examples might include use of English by a Thai speaker for international trade, an Igbo speaker in Nigeria for national-level political meetings, or a Chinese speaker for pan-Asian economic conferences. This is also called English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) (e.g. by Murata 2015).

Within the definition of communicative competence, then, the content of “what a speaker needs to know,” as well as judgments of relative success in attaining that knowledge, depend on the social context within which he or she learns and is using the language.

## Microsocial Factors

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Within a microsocial focus, our first topic will be *L2 variation*, which has received extensive attention since the 1970s from SLA researchers concerned primarily with sociolinguistics. We explore how contextual dimensions relate to variation in learner language and consider why differing varieties of an L2 may be chosen as targets of SLA even within groups who are supposedly learning the “same” language. Our second microsocial topic is *input and interaction*, where we consider how native speakers often modify their language in communicating with L2 learners, how interactional strategies among L2 learners may differ in actual versus virtual communication, how social and cultural factors may affect the quantity and quality of input, and how cultural knowledge and prior experience are involved in processing and interpreting input. As our third topic, we examine how Vygotsky’s Sociocultural Theory views interaction as the basic genesis of language itself and explore how learners negotiate meaning and fulfill pragmatic objectives even while their linguistic resources are still exceedingly limited.

### Variation in Learner Language

One defining characteristic of L2 learner language is that it is highly *variable*. Some of the variability is due to changes that occur in what learners know and can produce as they progressively achieve higher levels of L2 proficiency. However, there is also considerable variation in learners’ L2 production at every stage along the way that we can attribute in large part to their social context.

One of the most important contributions of sociolinguistics (beginning with Labov 1965) has been the demonstration that much of what earlier linguists had considered unsystematic irregularity in language production can be seen to follow regular and predictable patterns, when treated as *variable features*. These are multiple linguistic forms which are

systematically or predictably used by different speakers of a language, or by the same speakers at different times, with the same (or very similar) meaning or function. They occur at every linguistic level: vocabulary, phonology, morphology, syntax, discourse; they include both standard ("correct") and nonstandard options; and they are characteristic of all natural language production, whether L1 or L2. For example, native speakers of English may say: *I ate dinner* or *I ate supper* (variable vocabulary); *She was coming* or *She was comin'* (variable phonology); *She has sewed* or *She has sewn* (variable morphology); and *That is a big book* or *That a big book* (variable syntax); and they may respond to an introduction with *Hi* or *I am very pleased to meet you* (variable discourse).

Which variable feature occurs in the production of any one speaker (native or language learner) depends largely on the **communicative contexts** in which it has been learned and is used. Some relevant contextual dimensions are:

- *Linguistic contexts*: elements of language form and function associated with the variable element. In the examples given above, for instance, the phonological variable [ŋ] in *coming* is more likely to be used before a word which begins with a back consonant or before a pause, and the variable [n] in *comin'* is more likely before a front consonant. The part of speech can also be a relevant linguistic context, with production of [ŋ] most frequent in one-syllable nouns such as *ring* or *song*, and [n] in the progressive form of verbs, as in *I'm workin'*.
- *Psychological contexts*: factors associated with the amount of attention which is being given to language form during production, the level of automaticity versus control in processing, or the intellectual demands of a particular task. In learners' production, for instance, the copula of *That is a big book* may be produced during a formal second language lesson or in a writing exercise but omitted in informal conversation even at the same point of L2 development. Similarly, the variable [ŋ] is more likely to be used by L1 or L2 speakers when they are focusing on their pronunciation in a formal setting than in casual conversation.
- *Microsocial contexts*: features of setting/situation and interaction which relate to communicative events within which language is being produced, interpreted, and negotiated. These include level of formality and participants' relationship to one another, and whether the interaction is public or intimate. Such features interact importantly with the amount of attention that is paid to language form, as illustrated above for the probability that the copula or [ŋ] versus [n] will be produced, or that the differences among *see*, *saw*, and *have seen* will be consistently observed.

Macrosocial factors, which will be discussed later, may also influence linguistic variation. These include features of the larger political setting within which language learning and use takes place, including the social position and role of users (e.g. whether immigrant, international student, visiting dignitary), societal attitudes toward specific languages

and multilingualism in general, and institutional organization (e.g. patterns of education, employment, and political participation). For example, standard and prestige L2 forms are more likely to be used by international students or diplomats while they are functioning within those social roles than by the same individuals while they are shopping in a market or visiting tourist sites.

Variation that occurs in learners' language as they develop increasing competence over a period of time is of particular interest from linguistic and psychological perspectives, as it reflects a developmental continuum. This interest has increased within psychological approaches because of the Complexity Theory claim that "a degree of variability cannot be explained by influences from the outside world because some variability is an intrinsic and central property of a self-organizing, dynamic system" (Verspoor, Lowie, and van Dijk 2008:229). Variation that occurs in different contexts at a single point in time is of more interest from a social perspective, as it often corresponds to informal-formal features associated with linguistic **register**.

A substantial amount of research on the effect of microsocial contexts has been based on the framework of **Accommodation Theory**. Speakers (usually unconsciously) change their pronunciation and even the grammatical complexity of sentences they use to sound more like whomever they are talking to. This accounts in part for why native speakers tend to simplify their language when they are talking to an L2 learner who is not fluent (which we will discuss below), and why L2 learners may acquire somewhat different varieties of the target language when they have different friends (see Giles, Coupland, and Coupland 2010).

The effect of macrosocial contexts can also be seen when learners acquire different varieties of the "same" target language. Given similar linguistic, psychological, and microsocial contexts, for instance, female immigrants in the USA may hear and use more standard variants than male immigrants from the same language and cultural background – in part because females are more likely to find employment in middle- or upper-class households or in service positions, while males are more likely to find employment in blue-collar occupations. Workplace stratification affects both the nature of language input and group identity.

#### Research in Social Contexts of SLA

In one study, Adamson and Regan (1991) examined the pronunciation of -ing in Cambodian and Vietnamese immigrants in the Washington, DC, area. Native English-speaking men tend to pronounce -ing as -in', whereas native women are less likely to do so, perhaps because women tend to be more status conscious and want to use the more prestigious form. While the Cambodian and Vietnamese immigrants produced less -in' than native speakers overall, there is still a gender division with males producing -in'

more often than females. Adamson and Regan hypothesize that the Cambodian and Vietnamese immigrant males are unconsciously attempting to sound more like native-speaking men. The study of the social significance of variation in pronunciation is called **sociophonetics** (see Hay and Drager 2007).

Frequency of -in' according to sex of speaker  
(Adamson and Reagan 1991)

Subjects	Sex	Overall % produced
NATIVE SPEAKERS	Female	20
	Male	65
	Total	58
NON-NATIVE SPEAKERS	Female	15
	Male	23
	Total	20

Still more effects of macrosocial contexts can be found in the variable L2 production of learners whose L1 is relatively more or less prestigious in the wider society, and in the L2 of learners who are acquiring it as an auxiliary language for indigenous technical and political functions rather than as a second language for use with its native speakers. Speakers of a prestigious L1 may carry more features of L1 pronunciation and lexical borrowings into a less prestigious L2 than they do when their L1 is less prestigious. For learners of an auxiliary language, the target language grammar may not be that of native speakers, but of educated users of the L2 in their own country (Kachru 1986); learners may not wish to identify with or fully participate in a language community for which the L2 is politically dominant. These factors are explored further when we shift to a macrosocial focus later in this chapter.

Some variation in IL production (called **free variation**) remains even after accounting for linguistic, psychological, and social contexts as much as possible, and it can provide particularly important insights into processes of development. Indeed, Ellis suggests "that free variation constitutes an essential stage in the acquisition of grammatical structures" (1997:19). He hypothesizes that the nature of variability changes during the process of L2 development in the following stages:

- (1) A single form is used for a variety of functions.
- (2) Other forms have been acquired but are initially used interchangeably (i.e. in "free variation").
- (3) The variant forms begin to be used systematically (e.g. depending on the amount of attention to form or the situational context).
- (4) The non-target forms are eliminated. Removal of free variability is making the IL more efficient.

Summarizing the sociolinguistic perspective, then: (1) what is acquired in L2 includes variable linguistic structures and knowledge of when to use each; (2) the process of acquisition includes progress through stages in which different types of variability are evident; and (3) reasons why some learners are more successful than others include how well they can perceive and align their own usage in accord with the target system. Considering all of the variable features which occur in IL development and use, and all of the contextual dimensions which influence their occurrence, however, we are still left with the observation made in [previous chapters](#) that the sequence of SLA is remarkably the same under all conditions.

### Input and Interaction

Language input to the learner is absolutely necessary for either L1 or L2 learning to take place, but the nature of its role is in dispute. Within the linguistic approaches discussed in [Chapter 3](#), for instance, followers of behaviorist learning theories consider input to form the necessary stimuli and feedback which learners respond to and imitate; followers of Krashen's Monitor Model consider **comprehensible input** not only necessary but sufficient in itself to account for SLA; proponents of UG consider exposure to input a necessary trigger for activating internal mechanisms, but of minimal importance for many aspects of language development beyond the initial state. Within the psychological approaches discussed in [Chapter 4](#), those working from an IP framework consider input which is attended to (i.e. **intake**) as essential data for all stages of language processing; those working from a connectionist framework further consider the quantity or frequency of input structures to largely determine acquisitional sequencing, though this is partially contradicted by actual frequencies. Within the social approaches surveyed in this chapter, some researchers also consider input primarily as "data" for essentially innate linguistic and/or cognitive processes, but others claim a more important role for input in determining what features of language are learned, and how. Social approaches also consider the nature and role of interaction in acquisition, and ways in which it is helpful – and perhaps necessary – for the development of advanced levels of L2 proficiency. From a social perspective, interaction is generally seen as essential in providing learners with the quantity and quality of external linguistic input which is required for internal processing, in focusing learner attention on aspects of their L2 which differ from target language norms or goals, and in providing collaborative means for learners to build discourse structures and express meanings which are beyond the current level of their linguistic competence.

### Nature of Input Modifications

Language addressed by L1 speakers to L2 learners frequently differs in systematic ways from language addressed to native or very fluent speakers. In speech, the modified variety is called **foreigner talk**; it has the characteristics listed in [Table 5.1](#) (based on Long [1996](#)).

**Table 5.1 Characteristics of foreigner talk**

Simple vocabulary, using high-frequency words and phrases
Long pauses
Slow rate of speech
Careful articulation
Loud volume
Stress on key words
Simplified grammatical structures
Topicalization (topic at the beginning, then a comment about it)
More syntactic regularity
Retention of full forms (e.g. less contraction, fewer pronouns)

While utterances by native speakers to language learners are usually grammatical, simplified input may omit some obligatory elements. For example, JoAnne Kleifgen (1986) recorded the following utterances by a native English-speaking teacher to L2 children who were engaged in an art activity:

- \_\_\_ Mommy look at your work? (deletes does)
- \_\_\_ You have Indians in Korea? (deletes do)
- Would you give us \_\_\_ pencil? (deletes a)
- See, Siti's made \_\_\_ mouth real scary. (deletes the)
- Baby sitter take \_\_\_ care of baby. (deletes -s)

Although this teacher's modification of input to L2 learners was for the most part unconscious, she adroitly adjusted her language to individuals' level of proficiency. This includes not only the grammatical deletions that these examples illustrate, but also shorter sentences and less varied vocabulary addressed to the least proficient children. This selective modification can be considered part of her own "communicative competence," acquired as a result of many years' experience in teaching young English learners.

There is no direct evidence as to whether or not the modifications found in Kleifgen's study enhanced the children's comprehension, but we have reports that it does for older learners. When we surveyed international students at a US university to determine which professors they found easiest to understand, for example, faculty with extensive teaching experience in L2 contexts (who were more practiced in making appropriate modifications) were rated more comprehensible. Modifications with students at the university level are also generally unconscious, but they are likely to rise to an instructor's awareness when addressing classes which include both beginning and advanced L2 learners, or both limited and native speakers of the language. In such situations, for example, some find themselves restating a point they consider important with stress on key terms as a topic indicator and then a "translation" of them with simpler vocabulary.

**Table 5.2 Modifications in academic texts**

Frequent organization markers, such as headings and linking devices
Clear topic statements
Highlighting of key terms and inclusion of synonyms and paraphrase
Bulleted or numbered lists of main points
Elaboration of sections which require culture-specific background knowledge
Visual aids, such as illustrations and graphs
Explicit summations at regular intervals
Questions which can be used for comprehension checks

The types of adaptations that are found in speech to L2 learners are similar in some ways to the “baby talk” used with young children in many languages (Ferguson 1971). Some of the linguistic modifications appear to aid comprehension at early stages of learning: e.g. high-frequency phrases may be memorized as chunks of speech which can be processed automatically; pauses at appropriate grammatical junctures can help listeners recognize constituent structures; a slower rate of speech allows more time for information retrieval and controlled processing; and topicalization helps in identifying what a sentence is about and what part of it contains new information. On the other hand, the common practice of speaking louder to an L2 learner (as if the person were hard of hearing) probably does no good at all, and “simplification” of sentence structure may actually impair comprehension to the extent that it reduces redundancy.

Modification of written input for L2 learners also typically includes controlled vocabulary and shorter, simpler sentence structure. In written academic texts, modifications meant to help L2 students understand what they read are essentially the same as those used in textbooks for native speakers of English. These include those listed in [Table 5.2](#).

As in oral input, “simplification” of sentence structure alone is of questionable value in enhancing the comprehensibility of written text (see e.g. Floyd and Carrell 1987). More important for interpretive processing are the provision of relevant background knowledge and modifications which assist readers in focusing on important terms and concepts.

In the nature of input modifications, then, we find both similarities and differences for L1 and L2 learners. Some of the oral modifications may make acquisition easier, but all L1 and many L2 learners can succeed without them. Modifications in written input which improve comprehension are similar for L2 and L1 students, but research on their effectiveness for SLA is quite limited.

#### Nature of Interactional Modifications

Along with input, social interaction is also essential for L1 acquisition: no children can learn their initial language by merely listening to tape recordings, radio broadcasts, or television programs. In contrast, many L2

learners do acquire at least some level of competence without interacting face to face with speakers of the target language, and for at least some highly motivated and/or talented learners, that level may be very high. For example, a delegation of English L2 speakers from China visited the USA in the mid-1970s not long after the end of the Cultural Revolution, which had banned almost all contact with foreigners for twenty-five years. Members of the Chinese delegation reported that they learned English via language laboratory drills (notably translations of political slogans) and BBC broadcasts, and that they had not engaged interactionally in English until their (then) current trip to the USA. Some of the delegates' level of L2 proficiency was exceptionally high, so they must be considered successful learners. This observation does not argue against the helpful effects of reciprocal social interaction on SLA but does contribute to the conclusion that it is not absolutely necessary.

Interactional modifications made by L1 speakers in discourse with L2 learners appear to provide even more significant help than do the modifications of oral input which are listed above. Some useful types of modifications include those listed in *Table 5.3*, together with illustrations of each in English learning contexts (taken from personal observations).

Repetition by native speakers (NSs) of part or all of their previous utterances allows non-native speakers (NNSs) more time for processing and an opportunity to confirm or correct perception; paraphrase by NSs allows NNSs to cast a wider net for words they recognize and may increase their vocabulary store; expansion and elaboration by NSs provide models of contextually relevant utterances which may exceed NNSs' immediate ability to produce; sentence completion and frames for substitution provide NNSs with words or chunks of language from NSs which they can use in subsequent turns of talk; and vertical constructions allow NNSs to construct discourse sequences beyond their current independent means (a notion associated with **scaffolding**, which is discussed below).

Comprehension checks and requests for clarification by NSs focus NNSs' attention on segments of sentences which are unclear, and such checks and requests by NNSs inform NSs where repetition, paraphrase, or additional background information is required. These are important devices in the **negotiation of meaning** between NSs and NNSs which help in preventing or repairing breakdowns in communication. Other devices include selecting topics that the other is familiar with, and switching topics to repair conversational breakdowns which do occur.

### Feedback

Other types of interaction which can enhance SLA include **feedback** from NSs which makes NNSs aware that their usage is not acceptable in some way, and which provides a model for "correctness." While children rarely receive such negative evidence in L1, and don't require it to achieve full native competence, corrective feedback is common in L2 and may indeed be necessary for most learners to ultimately reach native-like levels of proficiency when that is the desired goal.

**Table 5.3 Interactional modifications**

NS = native speaker; NNS = non-native speaker

**Repetition**

- |      |  |
|------|--|
| NS:  | <i>This is your assignment for tomorrow.</i> |
| NNS: | <i>What?</i>                                 |
| NS:  | <i>This is your assignment.</i>              |

**Paraphrase**

- |      |  |
|------|--|
| NS:  | <i>This is your assignment for tomorrow.</i> |
| NNS: | <i>What?</i>                                 |
| NS:  | <i>This is homework.</i>                     |

**Expansion and elaboration**

- |      |                                  |
|------|----------------------------------|
| NNS: | <i>Hot.</i>                      |
| NS:  | <i>Yes, it's very hot today.</i> |

**Sentence completion**

- |      |   |
|------|---|
| NNS: | <i>For tell how old tree is, you count...</i> |
| NS:  | <i>Rings. Tree rings.</i>                     |

**Frame for substitution**

- |      |                          |
|------|--------------------------|
| NS:  | <i>How old are you?</i>  |
| NNS: | <i>Five old are you.</i> |

**Vertical construction**

- |      |  |
|------|--|
| NNS: | <i>Taki. (name of another student)</i>   |
| NS:  | <i>What did Taki do?</i>                 |
| NNS: | <i>Pencil.</i>                           |
| NS:  | <i>What did Taki do with the pencil?</i> |
| NNS: | <i>Throw. (makes throwing motion)</i>    |
| NS:  | <i>Taki, don't throw pencils.</i>        |

**Comprehension check and request for clarification**

- |      |  |
|------|--|
| NS:  | <i>Subtract, and write the remainder here.</i> |
| NNS: | <i>What is "remain"?</i>                       |

Negative feedback to L2 learners may be in the form of **direct correction**, including explicit statements like *That is the wrong word*; directives concerning what “cannot” or “must” be said; and explanations related to points of grammar and usage. Or the negative feedback may come as **indirect correction**, which includes several of the same interactional modification forms which were listed in Table 5.3, but here they have a different function. For example:

- What appears at a literal level to be a comprehension check or request for clarification may actually be intended to mean that the NNS utterance was incorrect.

NNS: *I can't assist class.* (Meaning 'I can't attend class.')

NS: *You can't what?* (Meaning 'You've got the wrong word. Try again.')

- Rising intonation questions by NSs which repeat part or all of a NNS's utterance ("echo" questions) often mean that the utterance was wrong. (In contrast, repetition by NSs with falling intonation usually affirms correctness.) The NS usually stresses some element in the repeated form with either meaning.

a. NNS: *John goed to town yesterday.*

NS: *John goed to town?* (Meaning 'The word goed is wrong.')

b. NNS: *This book is hard.*

NS: *This book is hard.* (Meaning 'You're right. It is.')

- Paraphrase of an NNS utterance by NSs may be intended merely to provide an alternative way to say the same thing without overtly suggesting that an error has been made, but what might appear to be a paraphrase is often a **recast** which substitutes a correct element for one that was incorrect.

NNS: *John goed to town yesterday.*

NS (correcting): *Yes, John went shopping.*

One potential problem for L2 learners is that they sometimes do not recognize when indirect feedback is corrective in intent. It does not help that the English phrases *OK* and *all right* (when followed by pauses) are often used as discourse markers to preface corrections and not to convey that the prior utterance is actually "OK" or "all right" in form or content. Even many experienced English teachers are not conscious of this potential source of confusion for their students, which highlights the importance and relevance of understanding L2 discourse conventions as well as vocabulary and syntax.

## Computer Interaction

Although computer-mediated experiences do not provide face-to-face L2 interaction of the kind reported in the [previous section](#), there are similarities as well as differences in the corrective feedback that they provide to learners. Especially when CMC involves synchronous oral interaction, for example, there are similar occurrences of corrections, repairs, comprehension checks, and requests for clarification, and they occur in similar form whether interaction is with a native speaker of L2 or another L2 learner (Jepson 2005). When CMC involves written instead of oral interaction, an additional type of feedback is negotiation of form, and learners pay more attention to self-correction (Chapelle 2007).

Participation in a virtual community may well provide a better early L2 learning environment for some students than face-to-face interaction does (e.g. see Blake 2007). Students who sign on for CMC can be anonymous. They can use a pseudonym and present a "face" of their own choice and creation. This anonymity can cancel social mandates which may be imposed on female and less prestigious male students not to display

competence in L2 production; this restriction is especially strong when less linguistically competent but more politically powerful students from the same country are enrolled in a class of international students. Anonymity may also encourage more L2 production and interaction by students who are by nature not “risk-takers,” and may erase other social inequalities that may discourage interactive participation.

### Intake to Cognitive Processing

We have already emphasized that language input may “go in one ear and out the other,” and it contributes to acquisition only if it is “let in” to the mind for processing, i.e. if it becomes **intake**. According to claims made in the **Interaction Hypothesis**, the modifications and collaborative efforts that take place in social interaction facilitate SLA because they contribute to the accessibility of input for mental processing: “negotiation for meaning, and especially negotiation work that triggers *interactional* adjustments by the NS or more competent interlocutor, facilitates acquisition because it connects input, internal learner capacities, particularly selective attention, and output in productive ways” (Long 1996:151–52).

To summarize the interactionist perspective, then: what is acquired in L2 includes only that portion of L2 input “which is assimilated and fed into the IL system” (Ellis 1985:159); L2 is acquired in a dynamic interplay of external input and internal processes, with interaction facilitating (but not causing) SLA; and the reasons that some learners are more successful than others include their degree of access to social experiences which allow for negotiation of meaning and corrective feedback. However, reciprocal interaction as a source and stimulus for learning ignores “autodidacts” who teach themselves from books and recordings. Further, this perspective addresses in only a limited way the evidence for universal sequencing in L2 learning.

### Interaction as the Genesis of Language

An alternative view of the role of interaction in SLA is based on **Sociocultural (S-C) Theory** (Vygotsky 1962, 1978; see Lantolf and Thorne 2006). A key concept in this approach is that interaction not only facilitates language learning but is a causative force in acquisition; further, all of learning is seen as essentially a social process which is grounded in sociocultural settings. S-C Theory differs from most linguistic approaches in giving relatively limited attention to the structural patterns of L2 which are learned, as well as in emphasizing learner activity and involvement over innate and universal mechanisms; and it differs from most psychological approaches in its degree of focus on factors outside the learner, rather than on factors which are completely in the learner’s head, and in its denial that the learner is a largely autonomous processor. It also (as noted above) differs from most other social approaches in considering interaction as an essential force rather than as merely a helpful condition for learning.

According to S-C Theory, learning occurs when simple innate mental activities are transformed into “higher-order,” more complex mental

functions. This transformation typically involves **symbolic mediation**, which is a link between a person's current mental state and higher-order functions that is provided primarily by language. This is considered the usual route to learning, whether what is being learned is language itself or some other area of knowledge. The results of learning through mediation include learners' having heightened awareness of their own mental abilities and more control over their thought processes.

### Interpersonal Interaction

So far we are using the term "interaction" to mean **interpersonal interaction**, i.e. communicative events and situations which occur between people. One important context for symbolic mediation is such interpersonal interaction between learners and experts ("experts" include teachers and more knowledgeable learners). Vygotsky calls the level where much of this type of mediation occurs the **Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)**. This is an area of potential development, where the learner can achieve that potential only with assistance. According to S-C Theory, mental functions that are beyond an individual's current level must be performed in collaboration with other people before they are achieved independently.

#### Lev Vygotsky (b. Orsha, current Republic of Belarus), 1896–1934

##### Social Psychology

Vygotsky pioneered the notion that children learn within communities, rather than strictly as individuals. He is perhaps most famous for his discussion of the *Zone of Proximal Development*, wherein children learn more with the support of adults around them. Because of international politics, Vygotsky's work was not available outside Russia until well after his death.



*Interesting note:* Vygotsky's works were banned in the Soviet Union from 1936 to 1956 because of his criticism of theories of psychology officially approved at the time, especially "Marxist psychology."

One way in which others help the learner in language development within the ZPD is through **scaffolding**. This includes the "vertical constructions" mentioned above as a type of modified interaction between NSs and NNSs, in which experts commonly provide learners with chunks of talk that the learners can then use to express concepts which are beyond their independent means. This type of mediation also occurs when peers collaborate in constructing language which exceeds the competence of any individual among them. More generally, the metaphor of "scaffolding" refers to verbal guidance which an expert provides to help a

learner perform any specific task, or the verbal collaboration of peers to perform a task which would be too difficult for any one of them individually (see Bruner 1985). Very importantly, scaffolding is not something that happens to a learner as a passive recipient, but happens with a learner as an active participant.

### Scaffolding

The following dialogue (from Donato 1994) is an example of Vygotsky's notion of scaffolding (within a peer group in this case, rather than from adult to child). Alone, each member of the group lacked the knowledge to produce the French equivalent of 'You remembered' (*Tu t'es souvenu*) in a grammatically correct form. However, each member of the group had some useful knowledge that they could all build upon until they arrived at the desired solution.

(In the classroom while preparing for a presentation the next day...)

SPEAKER 1: ...and then I'll say...*tu as souvenu notre anniversaire de mariage*... or should I say *mon anniversaire*?  
SPEAKER 2: *Tu as...*  
SPEAKER 3: *Tu as...*  
SPEAKER 1: *Tu as souvenu...* 'you remembered'?  
SPEAKER 3: Yea, but isn't that a reflexive? *Tu t'as...*  
SPEAKER 1: Ah, *tu t'as souvenu*.  
SPEAKER 2: Oh, it's *tu es*  
SPEAKER 1: *Tu t'es souvenu*.

For L2 learners, L1 as well as L2 can provide helpful mediation. Talk between peers who are collaborating in tasks is often in their common L1, which provides an efficient (and sometimes essential) medium for problem-solving and can enhance learning of both L2 and any academic subjects students are studying in the second language. Symbolic mediation can be interactional without involving face-to-face communication; although we do not often think of it that way, reading actually involves an interaction between the individual and the author(s) of a text or book, resulting in an altered state of knowledge. Symbolic mediation need not even necessarily involve language (although it usually does) but can also be achieved with such nonlinguistic symbols as gestures, diagrams and illustrations, and algebraic symbols.

### Intrapersonal Interaction

In addition to interpersonal interaction, S-C Theory requires consideration of **intrapersonal interaction**: i.e. communication that occurs within an individual's own mind. This is also viewed by Vygotsky as a sociocultural phenomenon.

When reading, for example, we engage in intrapersonal as well as interpersonal activity: "we draw interactively on our ability to decode print, our stored knowledge of the language we are reading and the content schemata through which our knowledge of the world is organized" (Ellis 1999:1).

A second type of intrapersonal interaction that occurs frequently in beginning stages of L2 learning – and in later stages when the content and structure of L2 input stretches or goes beyond existing language competence – makes use of L1 resources. This takes place through translation to oneself as part of interpretive problem-solving processes.

Yet another type (which was of particular interest to Vygotsky) is **private speech**. This is the self-talk which many children (in particular) engage in that leads to the **inner speech** that more mature individuals use to control thought and behavior. While inner speech is not necessarily tied to the surface forms of any specific language, private speech is almost always verbalized in L1 and/or L2. Study of private speech when it is audible provides a "window into the mind" of sorts for researchers, through which we can actually observe intrapersonal interaction taking place and perhaps discover its functions in SLA.

Muriel was intrigued by this possibility, and recorded children over a period of several weeks while they were just beginning to learn English (Saville-Troike 1988). She was particularly interested in finding out if the children were using English to themselves, and if so, what they were using the language for, during a period when they were generally very reluctant to try speaking out loud to others in the new language. Because private speech is generally much lower in volume than interactional speech, and often inaudible unless the observer is within a few inches of the speaker, she equipped these children with wireless radio microphones for recording purposes.

For the youngest children she recorded, English was largely something to play with. For example, three- and four-year-old Chinese L1 brothers (called Didi and Gege, meaning 'younger brother' and 'older brother' in Chinese) focused extensively on the L2 sounds and seemed to derive pleasure from pronouncing certain words. High-frequency private vocabulary items for them included *butter*, *pecan*, *parking lot*, *skyscraper*, and *Cookie Monster*. Both children also demonstrated their attention to sound by creating new words with English phonological structure, including *otraberver*, *goch*, *treer*, and *trumble* – impossible sequences in their L1. The focus on sounds not infrequently led to a private game, as the boys chanted rhythmically or intoned words to themselves. For example:

DIDI: *Jelly bean, jelly bean. Jelly, jelly, jelly, jelly.*

GEGE: *Yucky. Yucky scoop. Scoop scoop yucky scoop. Yucky yucky yuck-yucky.*

For somewhat older children, English was used more to comment about ongoing events. They displayed a higher level of mental activity related to L2 learning by focusing on grammar as well as on the sound of their utterances. This was very clear in private pattern drills, such as those in the following examples that were produced by a five-year-old Japanese L1 boy

in his kindergarten class. While saying (a) to himself, he was practicing English auxiliaries; his drill indicates he had correctly assigned *have* and *am* to the same syntactic slot, and he recognized the contraction *I'm* as equivalent to *I am*. Example (b) represents a “build-up” drill, where the same child practiced adding an object to make the sentence longer.

- a. *I finished. I have finished. I am finished. I'm finished.*
- b. *I want. I paper. Paper. Paper. I want paper.*

The oldest children Muriel recorded also focused on L2 form but added self-guiding language more frequently than did the younger learners. The next example illustrates a pattern which an eight-year-old Chinese L1 girl commonly produced while writing sentences in her language workbook. She first constructed the parts to herself, then named letters as she wrote, and finally repeated the result.

*I see a, elephant. E, L, E, P, H, A, N, T.  
I see a elephant. I see a elephant nose?  
Is in the, water. W, A, T, E, R. Water.*

In addition to play, even the youngest children used private speech as intrapersonal symbolic mediation, as illustrated below in our final examples of private speech. Here, they are making use of their L1 to translate to themselves as they incorporate new language forms. (The Chinese and mixed utterances below are glossed in English.)

DIDI (while watching another child who is crying):

*Look? Let's stop? Stop? Stop? Stop? Stop? Stop?  
Ting a.  
('Stop.')  
Stop?  
Bu yao ku.  
(Don't cry.)*

GEGE (while driving around on a tricycle):

*Dao skyscraper Chicago.  
('Go to skyscraper Chicago.')  
Wo yao dao Chicago le. ('I want to go to Chicago.')*

Private speech by these children provides good evidence that even when they were not interacting with others, they were not merely passively assimilating L2 input; they were using intrapersonal interaction in an active process of engagement with the input they heard, practicing to build up their competence. Similar audible evidence would be more difficult to obtain from older learners (partly because of the inhibiting effects of social constraints on talking to oneself in public), but many report repetition and experimentation strategies in their inner speech, and some report continuing private speech (often reduced to muttering) when not within hearing range of others.

Audible private speech may continue among adult learners in specialized, socially sanctioned settings where imitation or other controlled

response to linguistic input is considered “normal” behavior. A low level of muttering is frequently heard in language laboratories where learners wearing headphones practice alone in cubicles, for instance, and Ohta (2001) recorded students in a language classroom as they responded to corrections and questions quietly, even when they were not being directly addressed. The social constraints that determine which type of symbolic mediation is appropriate in a specific situation underscore its nature as a sociocultural as well as a mental phenomenon.

A common intrapersonal activity that is closely related to private speech is “private writing,” in which individuals record language forms and other meaningful symbols on paper in order to help store items in memory, organize thought, solve problems, etc., without intent to communicate with others. Students of language, for example, may keep personal journals or diaries of their learning experiences, jot notes in the margins of textbooks, list new words along with some mnemonic aid, write interlinear L1 translations in a text, and highlight or underline important points. Many language teachers list major topics and activities which they plan to include in a class lesson in a form of private writing, and they may add phonetic symbols to student names on their class roster which they otherwise might not remember how to pronounce.

Overall, Sociocultural Theory claims that language is learned through socially mediated activities. The S-C framework supports the view that some learners may be more successful than others because of their level of access to or participation in a learning community, or because of the amount of mediation they receive from experts or peers, and because of how well they make use of that help.

### **Acquisition without Interaction; Interaction without Acquisition**

There are challenges to a socioculturally oriented view of L2 acquisition, however. The following two facts are somewhat difficult to explain if we hold a strong position that social interaction is an essential *causative* force in second language learning:

- (1) Some individuals are able to achieve a relatively advanced level of L2 proficiency without the benefit of any interpersonal communication or opportunity to negotiate meaning in the language with others.
- (2) Some individuals engage in extensive interaction with speakers of another language without learning that language to any significant degree.

We might explain the first phenomenon by including learner engagement with text and electronic media as types of “social interaction,” as well as intrapersonal communication in the form of private speech and writing, or of inner speech. Such learners would not have the benefit of scaffolding with immediate help from other humans, but corrective feedback and other potential enhancements to SLA can be provided by other means. We could still claim that live face-to-face interaction facilitates L2 learning – at least for most people, but not that it is absolutely necessary.

Explaining why some individuals apparently interact quite successfully with others while developing little or no competence in a common linguistic code requires a closer look at what other strategies are used for communication. These include the following:

- Background knowledge and experience which help individuals organize new information and make guesses about what is going on and what will happen next
- Understanding of the overall situation or event, including its goal, the relationships among participants, and what they expect one another to do and say
- Extralinguistic context, including physical setting and objects
- Knowledge of genre-specific discourse structures: e.g. what rules for interaction are expected in a conversation versus a lesson at school, and what sequence of actions is likely
- Gestures, facial expressions, and other nonverbal signs
- Prosodic features of tone and stress to convey emotional state

In spite of cultural differences in each of these elements, there is often enough commonality to allow at least some level of meaningful communication between people who do not speak the same language, but who are cooperative and willing to guess.

An experience Muriel had in Taiwan illustrates how well these nonlinguistic factors can work. She had accepted a last-minute opportunity to teach English there, and she arrived in the country with no prior knowledge of Chinese. One of her first goals was to mail a letter back to her family in the USA to let them know that she had arrived safely. A student who spoke some English pointed out a post office to her, and she was on her own. The physical setting inside the building was familiar enough, with a long counter on the far side of a large, rather bare room. She knew from prior experience that she needed to buy a stamp, that the man standing behind the counter facing her must be a postal clerk who could sell her one, and that the people standing in line in front of her must be other patrons. She followed the "rule" she knew of taking a place in line and waiting her turn to be served. When she reached the counter, the clerk said something in Chinese (we assume the equivalent of 'May I help you?') and she asked for a stamp in English, holding out her letter and pointing to the upper right corner of the envelope where she knew that a stamp should be placed. He took the letter from her and said something else (we assume telling her the amount of money she owed, since that was what we expect to hear next in the sequence of this event). She held out a handful of Chinese coins, although she had no idea how much he had said the stamp cost or how much money she was offering; the clerk took a few and returned the rest. He said something, but seemed from facial expression and tone of voice to be satisfied, so she said "Thank you" and left. The transaction was thus successfully completed without benefit of any mutual linguistic knowledge, but making use of all of the other communicative strategies that we listed above.

Communicative events cannot be completed without a common language in the absence of familiar context and props, of course, or when nonpredictable information needs to be conveyed. Students studying in a foreign country, for example, cannot understand or express abstract concepts in academic subject fields without L2 knowledge or L1 translation; however, they may be able to function quite adequately in many social situations while still possessing only limited linguistic resources. If individuals have need and opportunity to develop increasing competence in the L2, they will do so; if they are not motivated to learn the L2, they may not – even if they have ample social opportunity.

An illustration of fairly prolonged interaction without acquisition comes from the experiences of Gege and Didi, the young Chinese brothers whom we introduced earlier with examples of their private speech. They not only talked to themselves while in the nursery school they attended, but addressed in Chinese their teachers and other children who spoke and understood only English, with sometimes surprisingly successful results:

Three-year-old Didi walked over to a teacher and showed her a broken balloon.

DIDI: *Kan. Kan. Wo zhe mei le. Kan. Kan.*  
 ('Look. Look. Mine is gone. Look. Look.')  
 TEACHER: *Oh, it popped, didn't it? All gone.*

The teacher understood Didi's meaning because he was holding up a broken balloon for her to see, and his comment was obviously about the condition of that object.

Four-year-old Gege looked at a hose lying on the playground.

GEGE: *Zhege shi shenme guanzi a?*  
 ('That is what [kind of] hose?')  
 TEACHER: *That's a fire hose.*

Gege's question to a different teacher was also clear because there was a notable object in the immediate setting which she could assume he was asking about.

In contrast, the following exchange was not successful:

DIDI: *Laoshi, qu na shui.*  
 ('Teacher, go get water.')  
 TEACHER: *What do you want?*  
 DIDI: *He shui.*  
 ('Drink water.')  
 TEACHER: *He shui. Um.*  
 DIDI: *Laoshi, qu na shui.*  
 ('Teacher, go get water.')

In this case, Didi was trying to get the teacher to understand that he wanted to have a drink of water. Didi's attempts to convey his message included repetition and paraphrase, and the teacher even repeated his Chinese utterance *He shui* in an apparent effort to understand it, or to elicit clarification. She understood from his tone of voice that he wanted

something, but this attempt at communication failed because no contextual cues were available to identify the object he wanted.

Our final example in this section shows that children can also make use of nonlinguistic cues for negotiation of coherent interaction between themselves. In this event, English-speaking Michael (also four years old) approached a playhouse in the nursery school yard and correctly interpreted Gege's repeated utterance in Chinese as a directive to come inside, which he rejected. Gege then "softened" his invitation for Michael to come in with a paraphrase, which Michael agreed to. Although in this exchange neither child understood what the other was saying, they successfully negotiated entry to a social event that subsequently yielded several minutes of sustained cooperative play.

GEGE:	<i>Yao jinlai cai yao kai.</i> ('If you] want to come in, then open [the door].') <i>Yao jinlai cai yao kai.</i> ('If you] want to come in, then open [the door].')
MICHAEL:	<i>I don't have to.</i>
GEGE:	<i>Ni yao bu yao jinlai?</i> ('Do you want to come in?')
MICHAEL:	<i>Okay.</i> [He enters the playhouse.]

The strategy that was shared by Chinese- and English-speaking four-year-olds in this exchange was probably the use/interpretation of paraphrase as having a "softening" effect. The sheer persistence of Gege in maintaining verbal interaction may also have been interpreted by Michael as a "friendly" overture, regardless of what Gege actually said or meant.

In due time, Didi and Gege became aware that others could not understand them. Indeed, when interviewed in Chinese, Gege stated this realization explicitly and said that he intended to learn English. Over the next few years, Didi and Gege became fluent English speakers, even dominant in English to the extent that they had problems communicating in Chinese – but that is another story. The illustrative case of *non-acquisition* here concerns the other participants in these events. Although the nursery school teachers and other children interacted successfully with Didi and Gege for several months before English became a common language, none of them learned even a single word of Chinese as a result of the interaction. The teachers and playmates relied completely on context, nonverbal signals, and internal information to infer meaning. They had the opportunity to learn, but neither need nor motivation.

## Macrosocial Factors

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We now shift to consideration of macrosocial factors in looking at how social contexts affect SLA, drawing primarily on the frameworks of the **Ethnography of Communication** and **Social Psychology**. These broader

societal approaches in research and theory allow exploration of issues such as how identity, status, and values influence L2 outcomes, and why. (See Norton 2013 for a review of research on this topic within a critical paradigm.)

The macrosocial factors we will consider are at several levels in the ecological context of SLA:

- Global and national status of L1 and L2
- Boundaries and identities
- Institutional forces and constraints
- Social categories
- Circumstances of learning

At a global and national level, influences on SLA involve the power and status of learners' native and target languages, whether overtly stated in official policies or covertly realized in cultural values and practices. Social boundaries that are relevant to SLA may coincide with national borders, but they also exist within and across them as they function to unify speakers as members of a language community and to exclude outsiders from membership; influences on SLA at this level often involve the relationship between native and target language groups, as well as the openness and permeability of community boundaries. Within nations, institutional forces and constraints often affect the use and knowledge of L2 in relation to such things as social control, political and religious practices, and economic and educational opportunities. Age, gender, and ethnicity are factors of social group membership which may potentially be relevant to SLA. Finally, circumstances of learning can influence SLA, such as learners' prior educational experiences, whether the L2 learning process is informal or formal, and (if formal) the type of educational model learners have access to and the pedagogical orientation of their teachers and administrators.

### **Global and National Status of L1 and L2**

Languages have power and status at global and national levels for both symbolic and practical reasons. An important symbolic function of language is political identification and cohesion. We see this in the USA, for example, where English is generally accepted as the single national language, and most people consider it important for national unity that all citizens be able to use one language. Immigrants who come from other language backgrounds are expected to add English as a requirement for citizenship, for participation in US democratic processes, for economic mobility, and for access to education and other social services. Maintenance of indigenous and immigrant languages other than English is not widely encouraged and is often actively discouraged. Indeed, pride in ethnicity along with associated language use can be seen as very threatening to the dominant group, and as a symbol of disunity and separatism; to speak a language other than English may be considered somehow unpatriotic and "un-American." In sum, learning English is expected, and the teaching of English as an L2 to immigrants is encouraged and/or mandated by state

and federal agencies. In contrast, state and federal support for learning other languages is sporadic and generally ineffectual.

The symbolic function of language for political identification and cohesion is even more important for countries that are in the process of nation-building. For example, establishing the official use of Hebrew was symbolically important to the creation of Israel, even though few early citizens spoke it natively. Massive efforts were made to teach Hebrew as an L2 to all immigrants, and there were social sanctions against the use of Yiddish or other languages which might rival Hebrew for ethnic identification or religious functions. Efforts have also been made to spread knowledge and use of Irish and Welsh as L2s for purposes of national identity, but these have not been as successful.

Second languages have also served political functions in times of conquest and empire-building: e.g. the Norman Conquest brought French L2 to Britain, colonial expansion brought English L2 to Africa and Asia and French L2 to Africa, and post-World War II domination by the Soviet Union brought Russian L2 to much of Eastern Europe. These three examples also illustrate the highly diverse outcomes which may follow periods of linguistic spread. The linguistic absorption of the Norman conquerors left behind a residue of French vocabulary embedded in English – no longer as elements of a second language, but integrated in English native speech. With the end of British colonial rule in Africa and Asia, English remained in some of the newly independent nations for auxiliary or official functions. In Nigeria and India, for instance, English was selected as the official national language (in India along with Hindi) because it was widely used and accessible, although not native to any major group of citizens (and thus ethnically neutral). In contrast, the role of Russian L2 has been of sharply waning importance as Ukrainian, Kyrgyz, Kazakh, and other languages of former USSR constituent republics have become symbols of nationalism. Indeed, the situation has become inverted, as many native Russian speakers living in the newly independent countries have recognized the need to add those national languages to their own linguistic repertoires: to learn them as L2s.

We see both historically and in the present that the need for L2 learning at a national level is strongest when groups from other language backgrounds immigrate to a country without prior knowledge of its official or dominant language, and when the official or dominant language shifts because of conquest, revolution, or other major political change. Need for L2 learning at a global level is motivated largely by control of and access to resources in areas of commerce and information/technology transfer. Opportunities as well as motivation for learning a particular L2 often depend on its relative power or status, whether symbolic or practical; this usually cannot be separated from the relative economic or military power or status of the society that it represents. For this reason, interest in learning Chinese as an L2 can be predicted to continue to increase as the economic status of China continues to grow. Where knowledge of a particular language confers few visible economic or social benefits, there will be little motivation for acquiring it as an L2.

## Boundaries and Identities

Part of the identity function of language is accomplished by creating or reinforcing national boundaries, but linguistic boundaries often also exist within or across national borders. They serve both to unify speakers as members of one language community, and to exclude outsiders from insider communication. The function of unification is illustrated by the official use of Hebrew in Israel and English in Nigeria as part of the process for establishing those nation-states. In contrast, the function of exclusion can be illustrated by the refusal of the Spanish conquerors in Mexico to teach the Castilian language to the native Indian population, or of the Mongol conquerors of China to make their language accessible to the Chinese. Language communities may also reinforce their boundaries by discouraging prospective L2 learners, by holding and conveying the attitude that their language is too difficult – or inappropriate – for others to use. When artificially created national borders transect language areas (as is the case for most former colonial territories or the Southwestern USA), social and political tensions may lead to discrimination against minority language speakers, and to enforced teaching of the dominant language.

Crossing a linguistic boundary to participate in another language community, and to identify or be identified with it, requires learning that language. It is both a necessary tool for participation and a badge which allows passage. Full participation also commonly requires learning the culture of that community and adapting to those values and behavioral patterns: i.e. **acculturation**. Whether or not this occurs depends largely on group motivation.

We considered the concept of motivation in [Chapter 4](#) as a difference among individuals which accounts for why some are more successful L2 learners than others, but motivation is also profoundly influenced by external social factors. Social psychologists who study SLA emphasize the effects of motivation on whether groups of immigrants or ethnic minorities integrate culturally and linguistically into the dominant society. The same general motivational factors account for why dominant group members often do *not* learn a minority language at all, or not too well if they do not want to be identified with the minority community. Wallace Lambert ([1991:220](#)) suggests this is why many English L1 students in Canada's French L2 immersion programs showed a limit on how much French they acquired even after years of study that began in childhood (and why some even regressed in their pronunciation of French when they reached high school).

John Schumann ([1978](#)) identifies other group factors that affect SLA outcomes negatively in his **Acculturation Model**. For example, factors that are likely to create social distance between learner and target groups, limit acculturation, and thus inhibit L2 learning are: dominance of one group over the other, a high degree of segregation between groups, and desire of the learner group to preserve its own lifestyle. English speakers in the Southwestern USA often live and work side by side with Spanish speakers for years without acquiring more than a few words of

the language, and Spanish speakers in Paraguay who employ Guarani speakers as servants in their homes rarely learn more than a smattering of Guarani.

### Institutional Forces and Constraints

Within the bounds of nations and communities, social institutions are systems which are established by law, custom, or practice to regulate and organize the life of people in public domains: e.g. politics, religion, and education. Many of these involve power, authority, and influence related to SLA; the forces and constraints which most concern us here are language-related social control, determination of access to knowledge, and other instances of linguistic privilege or discrimination.

The most obvious form of linguistic social control takes the form of official or unofficial policies that regulate which language is to be used in particular situations. For example, use of the national language is often required in political meetings and is sometimes required even for lower-level bureaucratic functions such as applying for permits of various kinds or negotiating for social services. A high level of fluency in the national language is typically required for election or appointment to political office, which tends to reinforce the power of some groups over others because of the language they speak. On the other hand, to the extent that political officeholders need to represent (or at least get votes from) speakers of other languages, competence in those languages may also be valued, and perhaps mandated. For example, presidential election campaigns in the USA have featured candidates orating in Spanish (often poorly) as well as in English in regions of the country which have strong blocs of Spanish L1 voters, in spite of the de facto national status of English-only. Use of even a few words or phrases in Spanish is intended to carry the symbolic message that the candidate is concerned about that segment of the population. Conversely, in Bolivia and Guatemala, Spanish was until recently spoken natively by only a minority, but their economic status and the institutionalization of Spanish as the official language enabled them to maintain control of the respective Quechua/Aymara and Mayan L1 majorities.

Looking at language-related social control in the domains of law and social services, we can see that language policy may result in blatant discrimination, especially if a trial defendant does not understand the language of the court, or if the officially designated language of "service" is not one in which some of those being "served" are fluent. This is likely to have a particularly negative impact on immigrants in countries where there is no provision for official communication in minority languages. As a side effect, differences in multilingual competence within immigrant families can lead to disintegration of the traditional family structure, as children who are learning the dominant language at school become translators and brokers for their parents in service encounters, inverting the power structure and undermining parental authority.

Access to education may also be limited for minority language speakers, since entry to those institutions often requires applicants to display competence in "proper" language usage. In some multilingual societies,

this means that linguistic competence may be recognized only insofar as it is demonstrated in the official or prestigious language of the dominant group; the potential for discrimination is multilayered, since access to knowledge of the language which is required for social opportunities may itself be prevented at an earlier level by financial barriers. For example, admission to universities and professional schools in some countries requires prior study of a foreign language (often English), with the necessary quality and quantity of language instruction available only in exclusive preparatory academies. These in turn may require prior language study which is not offered by public education, but only to children whose parents are wealthy enough to send them to private schools. Thus, wealth and social status may determine opportunities for acquisition of an L2.

Access (or barriers) to language instruction may also be motivated for other political reasons. The riots of the 1970s in Soweto, South Africa, for example, were motivated in part as protests against a language policy which would not provide basic elementary education in English, a policy that was perceived as keeping the Black population in the region from acquiring the unification and international voice which English would provide, and that Afrikaans would not. More recently, differential access to knowledge and power through a second language has been reported by Palestinians in Israel who say that limited opportunities to develop advanced English skills in their high schools block admission to better universities in the country because the entrance examinations require knowledge of English.

An unintentional international outcome of providing advanced-level education in English, on the other hand, has perhaps been inhibiting access to knowledge in some academic areas. There are contemporary concerns about the power position of English as the international language for scholarly conferences and publications, for example, since this status clearly privileges individuals in many disciplines who have received higher education in English-medium universities.

Although the acquisition of an L2 has been treated neutrally or positively as an additive gain from linguistic and psychological perspectives, from a social perspective it may be problematic for several reasons. Acquisition of a dominant L2 may lead to actual loss or attrition of a minority L1, potentially creating alienation from the L1 group for the individual, and the ultimate disappearance of the minority language itself. Also, acquisition of technical knowledge through the medium of an L2 may render the learner unable to express that knowledge in his or her L1. For example, native speakers of Arabic, Chinese, and other languages who study linguistics in an English-speaking country may return to their home countries and find themselves ill-equipped to make the subject accessible to others in the national language or to relate to traditional language scholars.

### **Social Categories**

People are categorized according to many socially relevant dimensions: e.g. age, sex, ethnicity, education level, occupation, and economic status. Such categorization often influences what experiences they have, how

they are perceived by others, and what is expected of them. When they are L2 learners, members of different social categories frequently experience different learning conditions, and different attitudes or perceptions from within both native and target language communities. Therefore, this is another level we need to consider in the macrosocial context of SLA.

Age is an example. We considered age as a biological factor affecting L2 learning in [Chapter 4](#), but it is social as well. Young L2 learners are more likely than older learners to acquire the language in a naturalistic setting as opposed to a formal classroom context. They are more likely to use the L2 in highly contextualized face-to-face situations rather than decontextualized academic ones, or ones which initially involve reading and writing. It is not certain whether these social factors favor SLA by children over older learners, but they make different requirements and involve different learning tasks.

Some aspects of the social setting within which SLA takes place may particularly disadvantage lower age groups. Young immigrant children who are submerged in L2-dominant environments appear ultimately to do less well both in L2 learning and in academic content learning through the medium of L2 than do children who immigrate after receiving basic education in their native language and begin L2-learning at an older age. For instance, [Gonzalez \(1986\)](#) has shown both in Illinois and California that immigrant students from Mexico who attended school in Mexico for two years prior to coming to the USA had higher reading scores in English by the sixth grade than did Spanish L1 peers who began school in the USA. In short, students with two years' *less* instruction in English did better in English than those who had two years' *more* instruction in the USA. Similar findings are reported by [Cummins \(1981\)](#) for Japanese immigrant students in Canada.

The likely explanation for such findings is complex, and we should beware of simplistic one-dimensional interpretations. Development of cognitive and academic competence in their L1, which Mexican children acquire in Mexico and Japanese children in Japan, may have a significant effect in promoting the transfer of these skills into English and enabling them to succeed in American or Canadian English-medium schools. At the same time, however, these children also have not faced the early negative expectations or pressures for assimilation in and out of school that their peers often do in a predominantly English-speaking setting, which may have adversely affected the level and quality of their instructional experience. In another famous case, Finnish children attending school in Sweden, where they were viewed negatively as members of a minority group, did less well than Finnish children in Australian schools, where they were viewed positively as Scandinavians.

Biological factors which generally favor a younger age for SLA can also be overridden by contexts in which older learners succeed in SLA to the level of being able to "pass" for a native speaker (even in pronunciation) when social motivation is strong enough. For example, research conducted with couples in "mixed" English L1–German L1 marriages suggests that age of first exposure to a new language is less important for predicting

ultimate ability than the age when learning the L2 *really* becomes important to the learners, and when they take active responsibility for that learning (Piller 2002).

Another example is sex, which we also considered in [Chapter 4](#) as a biological factor in learning. This, too, is a social category. We can see that different attitudes and learning conditions which are experienced by males and females may advantage one group over the other for SLA in different ways in different societies, but neither group has an innate advantage. For example, young male children of migrant farm laborers appear to be more fluent in Spanish L1 and better learners of English L2 than their female age-mates. The boys in a study that was conducted in California had been allowed to play outside in the labor camps with other children prior to attending school, while the girls had been kept inside both because of their responsibility to care for younger siblings and for their own safety. While the early limitations on their opportunity for social interaction were generally overcome with subsequent experience, the girls were at an initial disadvantage for language learning. On the other hand, girls were advantaged over a male peer for L2 learning in a classroom that was studied by Willett (1995). The girls were allowed to sit together, collaborate productively, and support one another; the boy was kept apart from other boys because of gender-related differences in his behavior, and he was not allowed to seek help from bilingual peers.

Different learning conditions for males and females are not limited to children. Some female students who enroll in study-abroad programs while in college report having less opportunity than male students to immerse themselves in foreign language and cultural experiences, which may inhibit development of L2 skills. This may be because there are more restrictions on unsupervised activities for females, or because female students tend to avoid situations in which they might encounter sexual harassment (see Polanyi 1995).

Ethnic category may have influence on SLA primarily because of socially constructed attitudes from within native and target communities as a result of historic or current intergroup relations related to social boundaries and identities. These attitudes determine to a significant degree what input L2 learners will be exposed to and make use of, as well as the nature of their interaction with native speakers and other learners of the target language.

The relationship between people assigned to different ethnic categories is usually characterized along one of two dimensions when the different categories coexist in heterogeneous societies: perceived horizontal distance between the groups, or relative power and prestige of one over the other. Members of ethnic groups who perceive themselves to have much in common are more likely to interact, and thus are more likely to learn the other's language. Miller (2000) reports that ethnicity is one of the factors involved in perceptions of difference in her study of migrant high school students in Australia. She found that fair-haired Europeans who physically resembled their Australian classmates established friendships and assimilated more readily than did differently appearing students

from Asia. Other factors potentially contributing to perceptions of social distance include religion and cultural background, along with patterns of behavior that are considered appropriate for interaction with strangers or new acquaintances. In research with younger students (e.g. Saville-Troike 1984), it was observed that children from South America and the Middle East as well as from Europe appeared to establish friendships with American children more readily than did children from China, Japan, and Korea. We might attribute this to relative cultural congruence of interaction patterns rather than to physical appearance.

Perceptions that members of one ethnic category are more, or less, privileged than another are determined in large part by which group is politically and economically dominant in a multiethnic society, which is also often the one that has majority status. Two outcomes of SLA related to this dimension are the types of bilingualism which may result from contact (Lambert 1974; Gardner 2002): **additive bilingualism**, where members of a dominant group learn the language of a subordinate group without threat to their L1 competence or to their ethnic identity; or **subtractive bilingualism**, where members of a subordinate group learn the dominant language as L2 and are more likely to experience some loss of ethnic identity and attrition of L1 skills – especially if they are children. There are many other social variables contributing to “additive” versus “subtractive” outcomes, including (for immigrant groups) the degree of opportunity for continued contact with their country of origin, the composition of families (e.g. whether they include grandparents or other elderly relatives), and whether the L1 continues to fulfill an institutional function such as the practice of religion.

### Wallace Lambert (b. Nova Scotia, 1922–2009)

#### Social Psychology



Wallace Lambert's diverse education and experiences explain his success as a researcher in the complex and sensitive area of bilingualism and biculturalism. Lambert (1974) differentiated between *additive* and *subtractive bilingualism*. Lambert is also well known for his work on motivation with Gardner (see Gardner 1985 for a summary). In addition, Lambert is known for his work in Matched Guise studies (Lambert, Hodgson, Gardner, and Fillenbaum 1960). These studies investigate listeners' reactions to bilingual speakers who read a passage in two languages. The listeners are not told that the same person is speaking and are asked to make judgments about the person reading each passage, thus possibly revealing their personal biases or attitudes toward the group they imagine the speaker to belong to.

*Interesting note:* During his student years, Lambert was involved with psychiatric social work, served in the army, studied psychology, sociology, and anthropology in three different countries (Canada, the United States of America, and France).

## Circumstances of Learning

The final macrosocial factors in the ecological context of SLA that we will consider are *circumstances of learning*. We begin with learners' prior educational experiences. These are part of the larger social context within which SLA takes place because learning begins with children's first experiences with the families into which they are born, the communities to which they belong, and the cultural environment within which they live. By the time children begin their formal education at the age of five or six, they have already internalized many of the basic values and beliefs of their native culture, learned the rules of behavior which are considered appropriate for their role in the community, and established the procedures for continued socialization. They have learned how to learn.

We already noted in [Chapter 3](#) that learner differences in cognitive styles and learning strategies are at least partly based in these experiences. The difference between **field-dependent (FD)** and **field-independent (FI)** cognitive styles, for example, correlates with how children are raised. Findings on this subject are somewhat speculative, but FD styles appear to be related to the more cooperative settings of rural residence, FI to more competitive urban circumstances; and FD seems to be related to lower economic categories and FI to more affluent. Cultural values for some cognitive styles over others also play a role.

A clear example of culture-based learning strategies is seen in the superior capacity for rote learning among Asian students who have had more experience with teaching methods that involve memorization. Chinese students score significantly higher than Europeans and Americans on tests that measure memory for numbers, which reflects ways they have learned to learn in the course of earlier schooling. This advantage is lost if Chinese students are schooled in Europe or America, which proves that their achievement is based on prior educational experience and not genetic makeup. Chinese students learning English as an L2 may learn more effectively and efficiently through memorization, while this approach may not work as well for students less accustomed to this learning strategy.

Another fundamental difference in situational circumstances is whether L2 learning is **informal** versus **formal**, or **naturalistic** versus **instructed**. Informal/naturalistic learning generally takes place in settings where people contact – and need to interact with – speakers of another language. This can be because they live in a multilingual society, their circle of family and friends is multilingual, and/or their lifestyle involves international travel and residence for business or pleasure. Formal/instructed learning generally takes place in schools, which are social institutions that are established in accord with the needs, beliefs, values, and customs of their cultural settings.

L2 learners who are majority L1 speakers often have access only to foreign language programs which offer the L2 as an academic subject and give little opportunity for students to develop full communicative

competence. In social contexts where multilingualism is highly valued and expected, however, program options are more likely to include other subjects such as history or science additionally taught in the L2, immersion programs with all instruction in the L2, or two-way bilingual programs in which students who speak different native languages attend classes together, learn each other's language, and learn subject matter through both languages. Where economic resources permit, options may also include study-abroad and student-exchange programs.

Minority L1 speakers who receive formal L2 instruction within the L2 speech community typically have quite different experiences. To begin with, because second language instruction for minorities generally takes place in educational institutions that are situated in and controlled by the dominant social group, teaching methods and materials may conflict with ways minority students have already learned to learn. Social attitudes toward ethnic boundaries and identities influence whether students are segregated from L2 peers or have integrated learning experiences. Social attitudes toward the value and validity of students' L1 largely determine whether instructional goals include multilingual competence, with L2 added while L1 is maintained and enriched, or there is a complete transition to L2. Most so-called "bilingual" programs in US schools provide instruction in the L1 only as a temporary expedient until students can be transitioned entirely into L2, after which the L1 is abandoned.

No individual factors in the macrosocial context of SLA can be isolated from others. Circumstances of learning are related to the nation that the learner lives in and its history, culture, and geopolitical position, and to social and economic categorizations within the society, which in turn are related to historical, institutional, and political forces and constraints, all of which are related to and reflect or determine the status of the languages involved. All of these factors powerfully influence the microsocial contexts of learning, determining who does and does not have opportunities for L2 input and interaction and of what sort, and what the outcomes of L2 learning are likely to be. The individual learner often has few or no choices in the matter of whether an L2 will be available for formal study, what language it will be, how it will be taught and at what levels, the level of proficiency that will be expected or required, and what the consequences or advantages of learning or not learning will be. The accident of one's birth may determine what L2s will be available or expected for informal acquisition, and what value or significance they will have in affecting one's life chances. These various factors are beyond the control of the individual, but whether options are available or not, one's L1 and possible L2(s) can have profound effects on the course of one's life.

### Chapter Summary

Learning a second language for communicative purposes requires knowledge and skills for using it appropriately, as well as knowing aspects of linguistic forms and how they are organized. Taking a social perspective, in this chapter we have seen ways in which L2 interpretation and production are influenced by contextual factors, how the nature of social interaction may facilitate or inhibit L2 acquisition, and how outcomes of learning may be determined by the broad ecological context of SLA. The L1 we are born into, and our success or failure in acquiring a particular L2, whether through formal or informal means, can profoundly influence the entire trajectory of our lives.

We have explored the effects of microsocial contexts that we see primarily within the communicative events which learners experience, including who they interact with about what, and how the negotiation of meaning is accomplished in various settings. We have also explored the effects of macrosocial contexts in accounting for language power and prestige, group boundary and identity issues, institutional forces and constraints, and other circumstances which affect learning.

We have now viewed SLA from three disciplinary perspectives: linguistic, psychological, and social. As these perspectives provide different foci and different insights, their multiple lenses bring us closer to the goal of a holistic understanding of second language learning.

## Activities

### Questions for Self-Study

1. Match the following terms to their corresponding examples:

- |                       |   |
|-----------------------|---|
| 1. auxiliary language | a. A French person studies German for six years because the school system requires it.                            |
| 2. foreign language   | b. A Chinese family immigrates to Canada and studies English so as to enter the school systems and the workforce. |
| 3. second language    | c. In India, native speakers of Tamil learn English to participate in official Indian governmental proceedings.   |

2. Variation in second language can occur for linguistic, psychological, or social reasons. Match the following communicative contexts to the corresponding description(s) of second language variation. Two responses have more than one possible answer, so consider multiple options and explain your reasoning for each match.

1. linguistic
    - a. When answering the question "What are you doing?" a child responds, "I'm dancing" pronouncing the final syllable of dancing "ing." The child then elaborates, "I'm dancing with my doll," and pronounces the final syllable of dancing "in."
  2. psychological
    - b. The same child on a playground tells a classmate "Yesterday I was dancing with my doll," pronouncing the final syllable of dancing "in." She later tells a teacher the exact same thing, pronouncing the final syllable of dancing "ing."
  3. microsocial
    - c. A student always remembers third-person 's' inflection on present tense English verbs when writing, i.e. "John walks to school," but often omits it when speaking, i.e. "John walk to school."
- 
3. According to \_\_\_\_\_ Theory, interaction is necessary for (and a cause of) language acquisition, and all of learning is a social process.
  4. The \_\_\_\_\_ represents an area of potential development where the learner achieves more through interaction with a teacher or a more advanced learner.
  5. The \_\_\_\_\_ Model identifies group factors that are likely to create social distance between learner and target groups and ultimately inhibit L2 learning (such as dominance of one group over the other, or the desire of the learner group to maintain its lifestyle).
  6. \_\_\_\_\_ bilingualism is where members of a dominant group learn the language of a minority without threat to their L1 competence or to their ethnic identity. \_\_\_\_\_ bilingualism is where members of a minority group learn the dominant language as L2 and are more likely to experience some loss of ethnic identity and L1 skills.
  7. \_\_\_\_\_ learning is instructed learning, usually occurring in schools.  
\_\_\_\_\_ learning is naturalistic, occurring in settings where people contact and need to interact with speakers of another language.

#### Active Learning

1. The author claims that face-to-face interaction is not absolutely necessary for second language acquisition. What do you think? Support or refute this claim based on your own experience.
2. Communicative competence is defined as "what a speaker needs to know to communicate appropriately within a language community." How is this different from pure linguistic competence? Do you believe linguistic competence is sufficient for effective communication, or do you agree that communicative competence is necessary? Provide real-life examples to support your viewpoint, combined with theoretical explanations from the chapter.
3. Subtractive bilingualism is defined as having members of a minority group learn the dominant language as L2, where they are more likely to experience some loss of ethnic identity and L1 skills. What are the

challenges to maintaining ethnic identity and L1 skills while learning an L2 in the L2 setting? Is it possible to be a minority group in an L2-dominant setting and experience more of an additive bilingualism, where the L1 skills and identity are maintained? Support your answer with your own experiences and the experiences of people you know.

4. Considering your own learning, or the learning of someone you know well, do you believe in scaffolding and the Zone of Proximal Development? Describe examples in your own life when you are the learner in need of scaffolding, and when you are the more advanced learner or teacher providing a learner with more opportunity for development.
5. The possible anonymity inherent in Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC) is seen as a great benefit, allowing learners to progress despite social position or personality. Has this been true in your experience (either as a learner or instructor using CMC)? If you have not used CMC as a learner or instructor, can you think of instances where doing so would have benefitted you or your students?

#### Discuss and Debate

Now that you have studied the three different theoretical approaches to SLA that are presented in this book, which perspective do you align with to the greatest extent: Linguistic, Psychological, or Social? If you have taught language, which perspective is most helpful to you in understanding how your students learn? If you have not taught a language to others, then which is most helpful to you in understanding your own language learning experience? Why? (If you answer "It all depends," then what does it depend on?)

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#### Further Reading

Saville-Troike, M. (2003). *The Ethnography of Communication: An Introduction* (Third Edition). Oxford: Blackwell.

This text introduces the basic concepts of the ethnography of communication, one important one being communicative competence. Chapter 2, "Basic terms, concepts and issues," specifically defines and explains communicative competence (pp. 18–22), along with other central ideas, such as communicative functions and units of analysis.

Bialystok, E. & Hakuta, K. (1994). *In Other Words: The Science and Psychology of Second-Language Acquisition*. New York: Basic Books.

Chapter 5, "Self," and chapter 6, "Culture," present discussion of social factors in second language acquisition.

Ellis, R. (1999). *Learning a Second Language through Interaction*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Along with several former students, Ellis reports on the role of interaction in second language learning. While some language learning may take place without interaction, Ellis openly supports the notion that most learners get their input from interaction, and that input from interaction will be more readily available to learners in the acquisition process.

Sanz, C. (ed.) (2005). *Mind and Context in Adult Second Language Acquisition*. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press.

Chapter 7, "Input and interaction," offers a basic theoretical explanation of the interaction hypothesis as well as a look at specific studies.

Lantolf, J. P. (ed.) (2004). *Sociocultural Theory and Second Language Learning*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

This book contains many perspectives on using Vygotsky's theories (i.e. private speech, activity theory, scaffolding, and the Zone of Proximal Development) in diverse areas of second language learning.

Blake, R. J. (2008). *Brave New Digital Classroom: Technology and Foreign Language Learning*. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press.

Written by a leading researcher and developer of digital curriculum, this volume gives an overview of technology in second language acquisition, and has chapters dedicated to evaluation of computer-assisted language learning programs and computer-mediated communication.

Pinker, S. (2007). *The Language Instinct: How the Mind Creates Language* (P.S.). New York: Harper Perennial Modern Classics.

Chapters 12 and 13 offer discussion of the social aspects of language acquisition and language learning.

Pérez-Vidal, C. (ed.) (2014). *Language Acquisition in Study Abroad and Formal Instruction Contexts*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

An edited volume, this book reports results from the SALA Project, a longitudinal research program about study abroad and language acquisition. It includes a description of the SALA Project, as well as results from studies about a variety of areas of language acquisition during study abroad, such as oral accuracy, L2 fluency development, phonological development, listening, academic writing, and learners' motivation and beliefs.

Doman, E. (2014). *Insight into EFL Teaching and Issues in Asia*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

A collection by teachers and researchers alike, this book gives insight into issues surrounding EFL teaching and learning in Asia. There are sections on action research, successful teaching practices, innovative language programs, and issues of students' autonomy and identity.

Hornberger, N. H. & McKay, S. L. (eds.) (2010). *Sociolinguistics and Language Education*. Bristol: Multilingual Matters.

Part II, "Language and society," discusses how aspects of society influence perception of languages and language varieties and motivation to learn or not learn certain languages, with chapters on multilingualism and language planning and policy.