

## **Second Language Acquisition and Foreign Language Learning**

**Kari SAJAVAARA**

### **1. General Considerations**

The mother tongue is acquired during the process of socialization and enculturation. Depending on the way in which language is conceptualized, ie. what is considered language – whether it is a system of rules that govern the accepted sets of structures or whether the uses and functions of the sets of structures in actual situations of communication are also involved – the acquisition of the first language is either completed by the age of four, the age when most people have internalized the morphology and syntax of their mother tongue, or is continued through a person's life cycle, new ways of making use of the language's immense potential being added to the reservoir of available functions.

The acquisition of the first language<sup>1</sup> proceeds hand in hand with general behavioural development: at the same time when a person becomes a member of the society where he or she lives, he also becomes associated with a certain speech community (in many cases, actually, with more than just one), learns the language used by the fellow members in that community through exposure to their ways of talking, and adopts various social practices that make part of that culture and subculture. It is extremely difficult to see what is language and what is culture: there are social practices which are never verbalized, but it is difficult to postulate true language without a link with a culture (for an interesting presentation of first language acquisition without any social linkage, see Pinker 1994: 25–54). At

---

<sup>1</sup>The question of what is a mother tongue is not always self-evident when it is considered on a global scale (see Skutnabb-Kangas 1981).

the same time, there is a great deal of variation arising from the kind of dependencies people have from various speech communities. For instance, through schooling a standard variety of the language may have taken the place of the vernacular learnt at home and from peers as the medium of everyday communication.

Second languages are mostly acquired similarly to the first, through participation in language-related activities when these languages are used for meaningful and purposeful communication with other people. Second languages seem to be internalized without much effort if the learner can take part in communicative interaction and is accepted, moreover, as a full member in various types of social practices. The level that he or she is able to reach depends largely on the nature of these social activities. In many cases, second languages develop alongside the first, and it is possible to say that a person has two, or perhaps more, first languages, which may however be functionally differentiated, serving different communicative purposes. Moreover, there does not seem to be any limit as to how many languages a person can learn in this way. It is monolingualism that is an exception in the world, not bi- or multilingualism (see eg. Romaine 1994: 32–36). For many learners, however, the process of learning gets slowed down and perhaps halted well before full competence is acquired in the second language, mainly because something less than that is sufficient for carrying out everyday tasks and activities or they lack the obligatory social links.

There exists a certain terminological problem relating to the internalization of languages. The two terms, *acquisition* and *learning*, are sometimes used interchangeably; sometimes a difference is made so that acquisition is used for the process of natural internalization, whereas learning is used for the process taking place through conscious procedures, mostly in the classroom. The distinction is not theoretically watertight. The fact that such a distinction is made by some researchers raises the problem of there existing no neutral overall term for the internalization of languages. In the same way, second languages are sometimes languages that are acquired naturalistically, while foreign languages are learnt formally in the classroom.

Language acquisition is never solely a linguistic phenomenon. It always involves both a psycholinguistic element and a sociolinguistic-

tic one. These elements are interlinked, and they function differently in formal classroom situations as against naturalistic situations. While languages seem to be internalized rather effortlessly in naturalistic situations, learners in the classroom seem to be handicapped in one way or another. There are several reasons for this discrepancy, and the present paper will be an attempt to try and fathom some of the problems involved. No attempt will be made here to give an overall survey of the status of the research into second language acquisition; for that purpose there are a number of excellent and up-to-date presentations of the entire field (Larsen-Freeman and Long 1991, Cook 1993, Ellis 1994, Sharwood Smith 1994, Gass and Selinker 1994, Towell and Hawkins 1994).

## **2. Language and Communication**

One of the fundamental activities in human societies is communicative interaction between people. Most of this interaction is concerned with the terms and conditions of mutual understanding, which is the common goal lying at the very bottom of most sequences of communicative acts. If the information that has been received is interpreted to be meaningful for shared purposes, the participants in the interaction can decide that the goal of the activity has been achieved. This decision is based on a subjective evaluation of what has been attained. We have no means of finding out to what extent the parties involved have actually understood what the other party has said during the interaction (Taylor 1992). Happily enough, approximations are sufficient for most everyday purposes.

An important part of a human being's communicative ability is the potential to evaluate the outcome of interaction critically. Common language is only one of the prerequisites of successful communication. There are a large number of other factors which may even be more decisive than language: shared conscious or subconscious rules and rule systems; other shared knowledge; correct observations of various constituents in the cosituation; and application of practical intelligence (see Sternberg and Wagner (eds.) 1986), ie. the skill that develops as a result of experience and logical inferencing. What is often considered to be comprehension of language and speech is actually goal-oriented interpretation of the world.

### **3. The Mother Tongue and Other Languages**

One of the questions that have been discussed extensively in the past couple of decades relates to the nature of the internalization process, the question whether the second language is acquired in the same way as the first or whether the processes through which they are internalized are different in some respects.

Before the start, some time in the late 1960s or early 1970s, of what is now called second language acquisition research, it was generally assumed that previously learnt languages have an impact on the process of learning other languages later. This was, for instance, the overriding principle in early contrastive linguistics: by comparing the first language with the language to be learnt, researchers were expected to be able to predict the problem points for the second language learner. Later on, contrastive analysis was supplemented by the study of errors in learner language as indications of L1-induced problems in the process. Error analysis failed, however, to lead to conclusive determination of the causes of the deviance detected in the L2.

Towards the end of the 1970s, mainly as a result of second language research among naturalistic language acquirers in the United States (see eg. Dulay et al. 1982), it became fashionable in the literature to deny the influence of the first language on the process of acquiring a second language. At the early stages, this work was largely based on the idea of morpheme acquisition sequences, a method that had originally been developed by Brown (1973) for the study of the acquisition of the first language. A natural order of acquisition was hypothesized: if this order was also found with second language acquirers, the conclusion was that the processes were the same. The orders were actually found to be only partially similar, and therefore the similarity hypothesis never received full acknowledgement. Similar sequences were also sought in the development of syntax (the best known is the multidimensional model developed by the ZISA project in Germany, see Meisel et al. 1981; a rigid developmental sequence was posited for certain types of phenomena while a great deal of variation was accepted elsewhere).

With the rise of second language acquisition research, contrastive linguistics was pronounced defunct. Most of the researchers in-

volved in this kind of research never paid much attention to the learning of second (foreign) languages in situations where the language input is controlled by a teaching programme and where the influence of L1 can easily be detected (for a discussion of the role of contrastive linguistics, see Markkanen in this volume, and Sajavaara 1977).

The early discussion about the relationship between the mother tongue and the second language was strongly influenced by the concept of transfer, a construct originally introduced within the confines of behavioural learning theory: it was thought that reactions established in the use of L1 also appeared in L2 as a result of similar cues. When behaviourism was largely given up as a learning theory in the 1960s, the idea of behavioural patterns being transferred from L1 to L2 also became obsolete.

More recently, transfer has been readopted as a term referring to various types of cross-linguistic influences (see eg. Kellerman and Sharwood Smith (eds.) 1986), and it is now being used without any reference to behaviourism. It is now generally acknowledged that the way in which transfer was earlier postulated was very superficial indeed, ie. carrying over superficial surface phenomena from one language to another, and that what we are concerned with is a very complex set of processes taking place at a number of levels of communicative activity (Odlin 1989; Lehtonen and Sajavaara 1988). It is not at all relevant any more to pose the question whether there is transfer or not: it is much more important to study under what conditions it occurs and what sort of phenomena are involved (see Kellerman 1978). This also implies that contrastive analysis makes sense, but only if we know what the phenomena are that we are contrasting.

It seems that the whole question of the interrelationship between L1 and L2 was wrongly presented as a dichotomy, ie. there is or is not L1 influence. It is more appropriate to ask what the conditions are where the first language is bound to exert some influence on the language to be learnt. This means that, in terms of the processes involved, the internalization of languages should be conceptualized along a continuum: at one end we have naturalistic first language acquisition in childhood, formal foreign language instruction at the other, and an infinite variety of mixed forms in between. It is to re-

membered that L1 also mostly involves instructed elements, and formal learning of foreign languages in the classroom cannot easily take place without some subconscious phenomena taking place as a sideline.

The way in which the relationship between L1 and L2 is conceptualized also depends on the theoretical model adopted. Chomsky's original postulation of a 'language acquisition device' (LAD) inside the language learner has been further developed into the idea of a Universal Grammar (see Cook 1993: 200ff.), which means that in their cognitive systems all individuals have access to the ingredients of language and the development of language is integrally dependent on the functioning of this grammar. This is how the first language is acquired: it is Universal Grammar that creates the language after the learner has become exposed to L1 input. With second and foreign languages we are faced with the problem of the availability of Universal Grammar. So far the question has not been given a definitive answer.

The Universal Grammar problem for second languages is also connected with the question of age. It has been asked whether the ability to learn languages fades away after a certain period of time, ie. whether there are certain maturational constraints on the learning of second languages. Under the influence of neurological research (above all, by Penfield; see Penfield and Roberts 1959) it was believed for a long time that people lose the ability to learn languages native-like at the 'critical age', ie. roughly at prepuberty. This idea has more recently been questioned, and the most recent work on the age issue (Long 1993) could be interpreted in the way that it is at the age of six that something takes place. After that age it seems impossible for learners to acquire native-like pronunciation at least. The whole issue of nativelikeness as a reference point has recently been questioned (Sharwood Smith 1992), because native speakers cannot be seen to constitute a uniform group. It all also depends on what terms of reference are used to determine the level achieved. For instance, what the reference terms are that are used to determine the quality of a learner's pronunciation: many non-native speakers with a rather pronounced foreign accent may outclass most native speakers in the other areas of the language concerned.

The natural order question has been turned into a learnability issue and, further on, also into a teachability one (Pienemann 1989). If language items are acquired in a certain 'natural' order, it may be confusing to learners to be exposed to these items before they come up in the correct order. There is some evidence from classrooms that this may be the case, but at the same time there is some indication of the positive impact of focus-on-form instruction (Lightbown and Spada 1990).

#### 4. Theories of Second Language Acquisition

There is a wealth of literature on second language acquisition (see, for instance, the bibliographies in Larsen-Freeman and Long 1991, and Ellis 1994). Most of the literature deals however with factors that influence the *rate* of language acquisition, ie. what the factors are that result in a relatively successful outcome of the process in a certain time period, what the factors are that speed the process up or, alternately, slow it down, maybe even stop it entirely (when the language competence becomes 'frozen' in second language terminology).

The interest in the *route* which learners take is of a much more recent origin. Here the core questions in second language acquisition research have centred round the classical dichotomy between nature and nurture, ie. whether languages develop as a result of a natural process or whether the final product is an outcome from some type of intervention from the outside.

As was pointed out above, the early work was closely linked up with behaviorist 'nurture' ideas of learning and contrastive linguistics, the latter primarily through the work of Robert Lado (1957). In addition, there was some important research into bilingualism and language contact (eg. Haugen 1953).

Behaviorist approaches were superseded by cognitively oriented learning theories. It is mostly assumed by cognitively oriented second language acquisition researchers that language is acquired in ways that are different from those relating to the learning of other human capacities. By the side of purely Chomskyan research, which led to the establishment of Universal Grammar, the cognitive orientation incorporates the work on developmental sequences, part

of which appears in the literature under the title of creative construction (Dulay et al. 1982: 11ff.). There are a number of other major attempts at constructing theories around second language acquisition. These include Anderson's ACT\* Model (Anderson 1983), various work on temporal parameters (eg. Möhle and Raupach 1989, Sajavaara and Lehtonen 1987), research into information processing (Hulstijn and Hulstijn 1984, Sajavaara et al. 1980), and the Competition Model (MacWhinney and Bates 1989).

A major attempt at developing an overall theory is one by Steven Krashen. His model is a combination of five hypotheses (Krashen 1985). The key idea is that of 'comprehensible input', which is effected through a special adjustment of caretaker speech to learners (Input Hypothesis). Krashen makes a distinction between two types of developing competences in second languages; they are called acquisition and learning, ie. communicating or knowledge about language (Acquisition/Learning Hypothesis). Conscious learning about language can only be used as a Monitor, used to edit speech after it has been initiated by reference to acquired data (Monitor Hypothesis). The rules of a language are acquired in a predictable order (Natural Order Hypothesis), and affective factors create a mental block, which prevents input from being incorporated with the data in memory (Affective Filter Hypothesis). Krashen's work has been important in that it has stimulated a great deal of discussion and research. It was the first major attempt to try and incorporate a large set of phenomena under one and the same framework. Krashen's theorizing has given rise to a great deal of criticism (see eg. Gregg 1984), which is mostly correct, partly misguided, but it is often Krashen himself who has given the reason for the criticism (see eg. Sajavaara 1987). (For a good survey and criticism of Krashen's work, see Cook 1993).

Input is an integral element in language acquisition, but it is not very clear today in what way input actually works in language acquisition. It is evident that only part of input available at a given stage of language acquisition becomes *intake*, that is, is acquired by learners. The input-intake connection was initially posited by Corder (1967), and it was subsequently connected with research in what was called 'foreigner talk' (see eg. Ferguson 1975; Wesche 1994).

In his Input Hypothesis, Krashen assumes that caretakers, people who regularly talk to learners, modify their speech in multiple ways to make their messages comprehensible to learners and that it is through their being comprehensible that learners are then able to internalize the language items. The evidence that Krashen presents for his hypothesis comes from a number of empirical studies, but there does not seem to be any evidence for the sequential complexification of the input the way Krashen suggests. More recent research has indicated that in principle he is right in what he says but that more rigorous research is required to attest the changes that take place in the discourse between caretakers and learners (solicited, for instance, by Chaudron 1988).

Recent research has concentrated on three areas: language socialization, input processing, and input enhancement (for an extensive survey of the research in the area of input and interaction, see Wesche 1994). It is quite clear by now that discourse used with non-native speakers is modified in multiple ways. It depends on a large number of factors, stable and variable. It is not only caretakers whose activity is to be observed: learners also take an active part in the modification of the discourse, as is actually implied by first language acquisition research (Bates et al. 1982; see also Sajavaara 1987).

Through the current emphasis on discourse and pragmatics, the role of input has come to be considered in connection with interaction, which also brings up the necessity to study the social processes involved in language acquisition, as has been strongly emphasized for a long time by Wong Fillmore (see Fillmore 1979). Interaction may result in the kind of modification in input that is crucial for the learning process, because negotiation of meaning is a significant element in human interaction. Since a fair share of language acquisition obviously takes place through interaction, meaning negotiation may be a means to produce the kind of modification in the input that it becomes comprehensible and meaningful in the right way. In formal situations, learning depends, at least partly, on teacher-learner interaction and teacher feedback (Chaudron 1988). Some role must also be assigned to error correction, which has always been an important part of instructed language learning.

If input is important, so is also output, but even less is known of its role in acquisition. Output, ie. production of the learner (often after a silent period of some length), may be valuable as a means of hypothesis testing: the learners are trying to find out whether their assumptions about how the language works are correct or not. Hypothesis testing has been assumed, from very early on, to play a certain role in language learning (see Cook 1993: 21–22). Output is not absolutely necessary, because people who are not able to speak for some reason can learn a language, but it may be important in speeding up the process, because it has an obvious link with the social function of language.

Routines have been known for some time to be in a key function at the early stages of natural second language acquisition. In some theoretical approaches to second language acquisition, chunking and routines are regarded as important building parts (see Schmidt 1992), and certain types of „memorized sentences and phrases are the normal building blocks of fluent spoken discourse... and they provide models for the creation of many (partly) new sequences which are memorable and in their turn enter the stock of familiar usages” (Pawley and Syder 1983: 208). The way in which they work in language acquisition has not been properly studied, but it has been hypothesized that certain types of 'islands of reliability' are created by them that function as supports in second language speech production (Dechert 1983, Raupach 1984). It is quite possible that here we also have a link between memorizing in formal learning environments and naturalistic acquisition. A great deal of memorizing takes place by means of various types of chunks, which are then transferred over to the safe area of a learner's speech repertoire.

### **5. Individual Differences – the Good Learner**

A number of second language researchers have been interested in the characterization of what has been called the good language learner. It is possible to present some generalizations, but at the same time it is important to remember that there is a great deal of individual variation (for a thorough discussion, see Skehan 1989). In the same way, when we are dealing with the success of individual language learners, it is important to pay attention to the part that social factors play in language acquisition. They are actually,

according to Wong Fillmore (eg. 1979), the only factor that explains the differential success of learners. It is no wonder because the „real – social – function” (Bourdieu 1993: 80) of language is at play here.

A number of variables have been presented as possible candidates for factors that speed up language learning.

*Age* comes up regularly in discussions of second language acquisition (see Singleton 1989, Harley 1986). Basically there should not be any reason why it is more difficult to acquire a language at a more advanced age. We are fundamentally dealing here with two kinds of questions: the potential problems related to the learning process and its final outcome. It is quite obvious that the processes of acquisition are different for children and for older people, but not necessarily to the detriment of those who are older. Adults can make use of conscious memorization of rules and other phenomena, which may speed up the process radically, whereas children are only able to make use of the subconscious channel, which under all circumstances takes time because it is essentially integrated with social practices – which take time. (Here we also have one explanation for the fact that formal instruction in the classroom cannot alone lead to a similar competence as natural language acquisition.) It is commonly held that children pick the language up quickly and easily: this is only partially true, since the process means a four-year-long full-time effort.

After puberty, age also brings in affective factors that are seldom present with children. Adults are not always open to external influences the same way children are; this is Krashen’s Affective Filter. Earlier it would have been possible to talk about inhibitions. External influences may be experienced by adults as a threat to their identities (see Laine and Pihko 1991), and they resort to various protective measures.

*Intelligence* is the next candidate (see Skehan 1989: 109). What intelligence actually is is by no means self-explanatory. When intelligence is considered in language contexts, circulatory inferences are never far away, because language is considered to be an important element in intelligence, and many intelligence tests involve a language component. It is possible to see however that people with different intellectual capacities learn their first languages in a similar fashion. Formal instruction is a totally different

world: intelligence obviously helps in memorizing things, and memorization is one of the basic tasks in formal learning.

*Aptitude* does not seem to play any role in natural language acquisition: all acquirers are apt to learn the language. As for formal environments, there is no consistent evidence that it is possible to postulate a separate human capacity called aptitude: better language learners are usually good also at other learning tasks. The tests that have been developed to measure language aptitude (see Skehan 1989: passim) measure potential success in formal learning tasks.

Another important set of factors relates to *motivation*. In the area of language learning, motivational factors have normally been discussed in terms of integrative and instrumental types of motivation (see Skehan 1989: 52ff.). Of these two, integrative motivation, ie. the wish to be like the target group, has always been thought to bring about better long-term results, while instrumentalist pursuits function quite well in restricted areas and for short-term goals. Other types of motivation have also been posited.

It is necessary however to expand the consideration of motivation and look at it from a wider perspective, drawing from research in other fields. It may also be of importance to subsume the concept of motivation under a more general framework of *orientation* (see Sajavaara 1994). A large set of factors having an impact on the learning product fall under the concept of effectance or competence motivation (Harter and Connell 1984). This is a construct that includes extrinsic and intrinsic orientation, perceived competence and perceived control, self-concept and self-esteem, and actual achievement. Learners' intrinsic motivation depends crucially on a balance between the objectives and challenges of the activity, on the one hand, and perceived competence, on the other. Perceived competence relates to what the learner thinks he or she is able to do.

In natural language learning environments, the challenges and competences are quite well balanced, because they mostly go hand in hand, while formal instruction often brings about unbalanced challenges to students. In natural situations, learners mostly control the outcomes themselves, and problems are solved through negotiation, whereas teachers set the goals and act as referees in instructed learning. Managing the situations normally precedes the language in regular everyday situations, while formal instruction

often presupposes the transfer of the language from the classroom over to the real world. Where learners perceive the locus of control to lie is of great importance for further development. A learner's subjective perception of being in control results in a better understanding of the phenomena involved, which leads to a higher level of achievement. This results in an elevated stage of perceived competence, which again boosts intrinsic motivational orientation (see Takala 1992: 111–114). It is evident that these enhanced states improve self-image, which also has a positive impact on the learning outcome.

*Attitudes* towards the language to be learned and the people who speak it and their culture may be very strong catalysts in the learning process, both natural and formal. In natural acquisition, the learning outcome is influenced by processes of convergence and divergence among the speakers of the languages in contact (Giles and Coupland 1991: 62–85), and in the classroom the integrative type of motivation has been found to be fairly strong (Skehan 1989: 57), and the lack of it too, but obviously in the reverse direction (Nikki 1992).

*Cognitive style* is also mentioned as an individual factor in language learning. Here we are mainly concerned with the phenomenon of field dependency: field independent persons are considered to be better language learners (Skehan 1989: 111–114).

In the last few years a great deal of attention has been paid to *learning* or *learner strategies* and their impact on language acquisition (Wenden and Rubin 1987, Oxford 1990, O'Malley and Chamot 1990, Willing 1991). There is a body of research that indicates that the learning outcome is positively affected by the use of certain types of learning strategies. The research in learning strategies is concerned with learning processes, exposure to language and interaction, and the way in which learning is managed in learning situations (see Skehan 1989: 94ff.).

It is very important to remember to make a distinction between high levels of *verbal skills* and language learning. People who are highly competent verbally are not necessarily good language learners. In the same way, it is possible that *extrovert* persons arouse a great deal of input around them, certainly more than many introvert ones, but it may also be the case that if they are highly

verbose themselves, they prevent the people around them from talking and giving the necessary input (cf. Skehan 1989: 101).

## 6. The Classroom

Several references have been made above to the ways in which language learning in the formal environment of the classroom is different from language acquisition in natural situations of language use.

Teachers have traditionally been more concerned with aspects of *accuracy* instead of emphasizing a natural flow of speech, which is often called *fluency*. For communicative purposes, however, development of a sufficient degree of fluency may be much more important (see eg. Brumfit 1984: 56–84). These two concepts are often juxtaposed in the literature, but there are also opinions that accuracy should be regarded as one criterion of what is termed fluency. The whole question of fluency is highly complex, and the theoretical basis of the term is rather hazy. It is mostly used as an overall term which covers the same area as language proficiency and, in some cases, communicative competence. Anyhow, as Sajavaara and Lehtonen pointed out early (1978), the only true criterion of fluency is the listener's reaction to a person's speech performance, and this reaction also depends on degrees of accuracy. Accuracy of form is particularly important where alteration of form may result in misguided interpretations of meaning or where some other kind of ambiguity may arise.

Since what goes on in the real world cannot be reproduced within the restrictions of the classroom and one of the advantages of formal teaching is the intensification of the learning process through the intervention by the teacher, it makes sense that a reasonable level of accuracy is retained as one of the central objectives in classroom work. Results of input enhancement experiments in the classroom (eg. Lightbown and Spada 1990; White et al. 1991) indicate that „when varied input enhancement activities focusing on the same grammatical principle (eg. increasing salience through frequency or other means, providing feedback, and setting tasks such as pattern recognition which require analysis of different language features) are pursued in the context of meaningful language use over an extended period, they can lead to changes in learners' interlanguage

system" (Wesche 1994: 248). This is definitely not the same thing as teaching grammar in the traditional sense of the term.

An additional problem in the organization of classroom foreign language teaching relates to Pienemann's teachability issue, i.e. whether the learner's language system has been developed to a state where it can process the input that is administered (Pienemann 1992). Although more research is needed in this area, there is an indication here that, at least from the linguistic viewpoint, learning is a causal process where elements of the system to be acquired can enter the system in a certain predictable order. It is important to remember in this context that linguistic aspects are not the whole story, and that the social processes between target-language speakers and learners are of great importance (Fillmore 1979).

The whole question of whether instruction helps is very complex, and there is very little systematic research into the ways in which various types of teaching programmes result in desired outcomes. Deep down there is the whole question of whether language learning is comparable to any other kind of learning. As is pointed out by Sharwood Smith (1994: 21), this has often been assumed, but it is not necessarily the case. One thing is definitely certain: input plays a crucial role in the learning process together with what takes place in the learner.

## **7. Conclusion**

It has been pointed out several times above that the learning outcome depends on a large number of factors which are other than linguistic. The most important of them can be placed in two areas: psychological factors and sociological factors. A great deal of these influences also depend on what is usually called context.

The sociopsycholinguistic environment is transmitted over to learners via their view of the world, which is largely derived from their respective histories of experience. The world such as they perceive it is as much their own creation, a state of the mind, as it is the reality that they see around them (cf. Pinker 1994: 55-82). In addition, they have also built up their own images of themselves as communicators as well as their private conceptualizations about the

role of communication in society. All this will affect their orientation when they are faced with the task of learning

The result is a personalized view of perceived competence, of what they think they can do with language. In most cases it may not be much different from what takes place in actual situations of language use, but it may be a powerful factor in view of the future development of language learning.

People are always members of speech communities, and are therefore bound to adopt the ways and means inherent in various social practices in them. When they are learning second/foreign languages, they may become members of new speech communities; if not, there may be something that is seriously amiss, or an important element of what language actually is (see eg. Bourdieu 1993) is missing: it is the social function of all language activity, often more important than the communicative one. Here we may have a serious problem which works as a handicap in foreign language teaching.

Language learning is a process, consisting of a highly complex set of different kinds of factors, many of them working in reverse directions. We should never forget this process character of learning: if learning is seen as an adoption of a static structure, there can never be truly positive results.

Since it is always individuals who are doing the learning job, we must also acknowledge the fact that there is a great deal of variation. People start from variable backgrounds and end up having different levels of language and communicative competence. The routes to a certain level of skill may be multifarious, but there is at least one variable that is absolutely necessary: it is contact with the language to be learnt in one form or another. This is also the reason for the fact that more languages have always been learnt without teaching than through it.

## Literature

- Anderson, J. R. 1983. *The architecture of cognition*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.
- Bates, E., I. Bretherton, M. Beeghly-Smith, and S. McNew 1982. Social bases of language development: a reassessment, in H.W. Reese and L.P. Lipsitt (eds.), *Advances in child development and behavior* 16, New York: Academic Press, 7–75.
- Bourdieu, P. 1993. *Sociology in question*. London: Sage.
- Brown, R. 1973. *A first language: the early stages*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.
- Brumfit, C. 1984. Communicative methodology in language teaching: the roles of accuracy and fluency. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Chaudron, C. 1988. Second language classrooms: research on teaching and learning. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Cook, V. 1993. *Linguistics and second language acquisition*. London: Methuen.
- Corder, S. P. 1967. The significance of learners' errors, *IRAL* 5, 161–169.
- Dechert, H. 1983. How a story is done in a second language, in C. Faerch and G. Kasper (eds.), *Strategies in interlanguage communication*. London: Longman, 175–195.
- Dulay, H. C., M. K. Burt, and S. C. Krashen 1982. *Language Two*. Rowley, Mass.: Newbury House.
- Ellis, R. 1994. *The study of second language acquisition*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Ferguson, C. 1975. Towards a characterization of English foreigner talk, *Anthropological Linguistics*, 17, 1–14.
- Fillmore, L. W. 1979. Teachability and second language acquisition, in M. L. Rice and R. L. Schiefelbusch (eds.), *Individual differences in language ability and language behaviour*. New York: Academic Press, 203–228.
- Gass, S. M., and L. Selinker 1994. *Second language acquisition: an introductory course*. Hillsdale, N. J.: Erlbaum.
- Giles, H., and N. Coupland 1991. *Language: contexts and consequences*. Milton Keynes: Open University Press.

- Gregg, K. 1984. Krashen's Monitor and Occam's Razor, *Applied Linguistics* 5, 79–100.
- Harley, B. 1986. *Age in second language acquisition*. Rowley, Mass.: Newbury House.
- Harter, S., and J. P. Connell 1984. A model of children's achievement and related self-perceptions of competence, control, and motivational orientation. *Advances in motivation and achievement* 3, 219–250.
- Haugen, E. 1953. *The Norwegian language in America*. Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Hulstijn, J., and W. Hulstijn 1984. Grammatical errors as a function of processing constraints and explicit knowledge, *Language Learning* 34, 23–43.
- Kellerman, E. 1977. Giving learners a break: native language intuitions as a source of predictions about transferability, *Working Papers on Bilingualism* 15, 59–92.
- Kellerman, E. and M. Sharwood Smith (eds.) 1986. *Crosslinguistic influence in second language acquisition*. Oxford: Pergamon.
- Krashen, S. C. 1985. *The Input Hypothesis: issues and implications*. London: Longman.
- Lado, R. 1957. *Linguistics across cultures*. Ann Arbor, Michigan: University of Michigan Press.
- Laine, E., and M.-K. Pihko 1991. *Kieliminä ja sen mittaaminen* [The foreign language self concept and how to measure it]. Institute for Educational Research, Publications A, Research Reports 47. Jyväskylä: University of Jyväskylä.
- Larsen-Freeman, D., and M. H. Long 1991. *An introduction to second language acquisition research*. London: Longman.
- Lehtonen, J., and K. Sajavaara 1988. Psycholinguistic testing of transfer in foreign-language speech processing, *Folia Linguistica* 22, 179–202.
- Lightbown, P., and N. Spada 1990. Focus-on-form and corrective feedback in communicative language teaching: effects on second language learning, *Studies in Second Language Acquisition* 12, 429–448.
- Long, M. H. 1993. Sensitive periods in second language acquisition. Paper read at AILA 93, Amsterdam, August, 1993.

- MacWhinney, B., and E. Bates (eds.) 1989. *The crosslinguistic study of sentence processing*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Meisel, J., H. Clahsen, and M. Pienemann 1981. On determining developmental stages in natural second language acquisition, *Studies in Second Language Acquisition* 3, 109–135.
- Möhle, D., and M. Raupach 1989. Language transfer and procedural knowledge, in H. Dechert and M. Raupach (eds.), *Transfer in language production*, Norwood, N.J.: Ablex, 195–216.
- Nikki, M.-L. 1992. *The implementation of the Finnish national plan for foreign language teaching*. Jyväskylä: University of Jyväskylä.
- Odlin, T. 1989. *Language transfer: cross-linguistic influence in language learning*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- O'Malley, J. M., and A. U. Chamot 1990. *Learning strategies in second language acquisition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Oxford, R. 1990. *Language learning strategies: what every teacher should know*. New York: Newbury House.
- Pawley, A., and F. H. Syder 1983. Two puzzles for linguistic theory: nativelike selection and nativelike fluency, in J.C. Richards and R.W. Schmidt (eds.), *Language and communication*, London: Longman, 191–226.
- Penfield, W., and L. Roberts 1959. *Speech and brain mechanisms*. New York: Atheneum Press.
- Pienemann, M. 1989. Is language teachable? *Applied Linguistics* 10, 52–79.
- Pienemann, M. 1992. Teachability theory, in *Language acquisition in the classroom*, Language Acquisition Research Centre, National Languages and Literacy Institute of Australia, University of Sydney.
- Pinker, S. 1994. *The language instinct: the new science of language and mind*. London: Penguin Press.
- Raupach, M. 1984. Formulae in second language production, in H. W. Dechert, D. Möhle, and M. Raupach (eds.), *Second language production*, Tübingen: Narr, 114–137.
- Romaine, S. 1994. *Language in society: introduction to sociolinguistics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

- Sajavaara, K. 1977. Contrastive linguistics past and present and a communicative approach, in K. Sajavaara and J. Lehtonen (eds.), *Contrastive papers*, Jyväskylä Contrastive Studies 4, Jyväskylä: University of Jyväskylä, 9–30.
- Sajavaara, K. 1987. Intake in second language acquisition, in W. Lörcher and R. Schulze (eds.), *Perspectives on language in performance*, Tübinger Beiträge zur Linguistik 317, Tübingen: Gunter Narr, 1190–1199.
- Sajavaara, K. 1994. Orientation in national foreign language planning, in R. D. Lambert (ed.), *Language planning around the world: contexts and systemic change*, Washington, D. C.: National Foreign Language Center, 143–164.
- Sajavaara, K., and J. Lehtonen 1988. Aspects of transfer in foreign language speakers' reactions to acceptability, in H. W. Dechert and M. Raupach (eds.), *Transfer in language production*, Norwood, N. J.: Ablex, 35–52.
- Sajavaara, K., J. Lehtonen, and L. Korpimies 1980. The methodology and practice of contrastive discourse analysis, in K. Sajavaara and J. Lehtonen (eds.), *Papers in discourse and contrastive discourse analysis*, Jyväskylä Contrastive Studies 5, Jyväskylä: University of Jyväskylä, 27–55.
- Schmidt, R. 1992. Psychological mechanisms underlying second language fluency, *Studies in Second Language Acquisition* 14, 357–385.
- Sharwood Smith, M. 1994. *Second language learning: theoretical foundations*. London: Longman.
- Sharwood Smith, M. 1992. The death of the native speaker. A paper read at the EUROSLA Conference, Jyväskylä, June, 1992.
- Singleton, D. 1989. *Language acquisition: the age factor*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
- Skehan, P. 1989. *Individual differences in second-language learning*. London: Edward Arnold.
- Skutnabb-Kangas, T. 1981. *Bilingualism or not: the education of minorities*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
- Sternberg, R. J., and R. K. Wagner (eds.) 1986. *Practical intelligence: nature and origins of competence in the everyday world*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Takala, S. 1992. *Virikkeitä kokeilevaan koulutyöhön* [Stimuli for experimental approaches in the classroom]. Jyväskylä: Institute for Educational Research, University of Jyväskylä.
- Taylor, T. J. 1992. *Mutual misunderstanding: scepticism and theorizing of language and interpretation*. London: Routledge.
- Towell, R., and R. Hawkins 1994. *Approaches to second language acquisition*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
- Wenden, A., and J. Rubin (eds.) 1987. *Learner strategies in language learning*. Englewood-Cliffs: Prentice-Hall.
- Wesche, M. B. 1994. Input and interaction in second language acquisition, in Clare Gallaway and Brian J. Richards (eds.), *Input and interaction in language acquisition*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 219–249.
- White, L., N. Spada, P. Lightbown, and L. Ranta 1991. Input enhancement and L2 question formation, *Applied Linguistics* 12, 416–432.
- Willing, K. 1991. *Teaching how to learn: learning strategies in ESL. Teacher's guide*. Sydney: National Centre for English Language Teaching and Research.