



Vivian Cook

Fifth Edition

Second Language Learning and Language Teaching

'Vivian Cook offers us a thorough review of SLA research and second language teaching practice, often flavored with his distinctive wit. Guiding questions, concise explanations, and helpful examples initiate the reader into the world of language teaching. Although Cook does not endorse any one approach, his multi-competent L2 user perspective is evident throughout the book. This invaluable contribution to our field should be required reading for all language teachers.'

Virginia M. Scott, Vanderbilt University, USA

'Here's a book that genuinely speaks to and enables improvement in the work of practitioners by taking them through the useful theories, models and findings of second language acquisition research—all tried and tested on many cohorts of students and teachers from all over the world. The new edition will appeal to a new generation of language teaching professionals for many years to come.'

Li Wei, University College, London, UK

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Second Language Learning and Language Teaching

Second Language Learning and Language Teaching provides an introduction to the application of second language acquisition (SLA) research to language teaching. Assuming no previous background in SLA or language teaching methods, this text starts by introducing readers to the basic issues of SLA research. It then examines how people learn particular aspects of the second language, such as grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation and the writing system, and the strategies they adopt in their learning. Final chapters look at second language learning in a broader context—the goals of language teaching and how teaching methods relate to SLA research. This newly updated fifth edition builds on the comprehensive scope of earlier editions while also addressing more recent developments in the field, particularly multicultural approaches to language teaching.

Vivian Cook is an emeritus Professor of Applied Linguistics at Newcastle University. His main current interests are how people learn second languages and how writing works in different languages, particularly in street signs. He is a founder of the European Second Language Association and co-founder and co-editor of the journal *Writing System Research*.

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Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

NEW YORK AND LONDON

Fifth edition published 2016
by Routledge
711 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10017

and by Routledge
2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon, OX14 4RN

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

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First edition published 2001 by Arnold.

Fourth edition published 2008 by Hodder and 2013 by Routledge.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Cook, Vivian, 1940– author.

Title: Second language learning and language teaching / Vivian Cook.

Description: Fifth Edition. | New York : Routledge, [2017] | Includes bibliographical references and index.

Identifiers: LCCN 2015045479 (print) | LCCN 2015047656 (ebook) |

ISBN 9780415713771 (hardback : alk. paper) |

ISBN 9780415713801 (pbk. : alk. paper) | ISBN 9781315883113

(Master) | ISBN 9781134683222 (Web PDF) |

ISBN 9781134683291 (ePub) | ISBN 9781134683369

(Mobipocket/Kindle)

Subjects: LCSH: Second language acquisition. | Language and languages—Study and teaching.

Classification: LCC P118.2 .C67 2017 (print) | LCC P118.2 (ebook) |

DDC 418.0071—dc23

LC record available at <http://lcn.loc.gov/2015045479>

ISBN: 978-0-415-71377-1 (hbk)

ISBN: 978-0-415-71380-1 (pbk)

ISBN: 978-1-315-88311-3 (ebk)

Typeset in Goudy

by Apex CoVantage, LLC

Please visit <http://www.viviancook.uk/SLLandLT/SLL<5thed.html> for a wide range of supplementary materials including questionnaires, a glossary of keywords, samples of research techniques, and booklists, among others.

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Acknowledgments

The motto of this book as before comes from Otto Jespersen (1904): ‘The really important thing is less the destruction of bad old methods than a positive indication of the new ways to be followed if we are to have thoroughly efficient teaching in modern languages’. The new edition has benefited from the feedback of students, colleagues and readers. In particular I am grateful to the MA students at Newcastle University and to the teachers in Japan and Poland who provided the students’ comments incorporated in this edition. Without the musical influence of Miles Davis, Marco Zurzolo and Shabaka Hutchings, it would never have been finished.

Teacher's Foreword

This book provides an introduction to the application of second language acquisition (SLA) research to language teaching suitable for language teachers, student teachers and students on courses in applied linguistics, TESOL, methodology of modern language teaching and so on. It presupposes no previous background in linguistics or language teaching and provides explanations and glossaries of important terms. Most sections of each chapter start with focusing questions and keywords and end with summaries of the area and of its application, as well as having discussion topics and further reading.

The scope of the book ranges from particular aspects of language and language teaching to broader contexts of second language acquisition and general ideas of language teaching. After the general background in Chapter 1, the next four chapters look at how people learn particular aspects of the second language: grammar in Chapter 2, vocabulary in Chapter 3, pronunciation in Chapter 4, and the writing system in Chapter 5. The next two chapters treat learners as individuals, dealing with learners' strategies in Chapter 6 and individual differences in Chapter 7. The remaining chapters adopt a wider perspective. Chapter 8 looks at the nature of the L2 user and the native speaker, Chapter 9 at goals of language teaching, and Chapter 10 at models of second language acquisition. The final one, Chapter 11, discusses different styles of language teaching and looks for their foundations in SLA research.

The writing of the fifth edition has been largely guided by feedback from students, teachers and colleagues in Newcastle University. The broad framework and approach of the fourth edition have been maintained. The companion website (available at <http://www.viviancook.uk/SLLandLT/SLL<5thed.html>) offers a wide range of materials for users of this book including support materials, notes, questionnaires, a glossary of keywords, samples of research techniques, booklists, and lists of other related sites. There are also videos supporting several aspects on the Youtube channel *itsallinaword* (<https://www.youtube.com/user/itsallinaword>).

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1 Background to Second Language Acquisition Research and Language Teaching

Language is at the centre of human life. We use it to express our love or our hates, to achieve our goals and further our careers, to gain artistic satisfaction or simple pleasure, to pray or to blaspheme. Through language we plan our lives and remember our past; we exchange ideas and experiences; we form our social and individual identities. Language is the most unique thing about human beings. As the Roman orator Cicero said in 55BC, ‘The one thing in which we are especially superior to beasts is that we speak to each other’.

Some people are able to do some or all of this in more than one language. Knowing another language may mean: getting a job; a chance to get educated; the ability to take a fuller part in the life of one’s own country or the opportunity to emigrate to another; an expansion of one’s literary and cultural horizons; the expression of one’s political opinions or religious beliefs; the chance to talk to people on a foreign holiday. A second language affects people’s careers and possible futures, their lives and their very identities. In a world where more people probably speak two languages than one, the acquisition and use of second languages are vital to the everyday lives of millions; monolinguals are nowadays almost an endangered species. Helping people acquire second languages more effectively is an important task for the twenty-first century.

1.1. The Scope of This Book

The main aim of this book is to communicate to language teachers some ideas about how people acquire second languages that come from the discipline of second language acquisition (SLA) research. It is not a guide to SLA research methodology itself or to the merits and failings of particular SLA research techniques, which are covered in books such as *Research Methods in Second Language Acquisition: A Practical Guide* (Mackey and Gass, 2011) and *Second Language Learning Theories* (Mitchell, Myles and Marsden, 2012). Nor is it a guide to the many methods and techniques of language teaching, only to some of those that connect with SLA research. Indeed SLA research is only one of the many areas that language teachers need to look at when deciding what to do in their classrooms. The book is intended for language teachers and trainee teachers rather than researchers. While it tries not to take sides in reporting the various issues, inevitably the bias towards the multi-competence perspective I have been involved with for some time is hard to conceal.

2 Background to SLA Research and Teaching

Much of the discussion concerns the L2 learning and teaching of English, mainly because this is the chief language that has been investigated in SLA research. English is, however, used here as a source of examples rather than being the subject matter itself. Other modern languages are discussed when appropriate. The English language is unique in being the only language that can be used almost anywhere on the globe between people who are non-native speakers, what De Swaan (2001) calls the one and only hypercentral language; hence conclusions about language acquisition based on English may not necessarily apply to other languages. Most sections of each chapter start with focusing questions, a display defining keywords and an explanation of some of the language background, and end with discussion topics, further reading and glossaries of technical terms.

Contact with the language teaching classroom is maintained in this book chiefly through the discussion of published coursebooks and syllabuses, usually for teaching English. Even if good teachers use books only as a jumping-off point, they can provide a window into many classrooms. The books and syllabuses cited come from countries ranging from Israel to Japan to Cuba, though inevitably the bias is towards coursebooks published in England for reasons of accessibility. Since many modern language teaching coursebooks are depressingly similar in orientation, the examples of less familiar approaches have often been taken from older coursebooks. Coursebooks will usually be cited by their titles as this is how teachers usually refer to them; a list is provided at the end of this book.

This book talks about only a fraction of the SLA research on a given topic, often presenting only one or two of the possible approaches. It concentrates on those based on ideas about language, i.e. applied linguistics, rather than those coming from psychology or education. Yet it nevertheless covers more areas of SLA research than most books that link SLA research to language teaching, for example taking in pronunciation, vocabulary and writing among others, not just grammar. It uses ideas from the wealth of research produced in the past twenty years or so rather than just the most recent. Sometimes it has to go beyond the strict borders of SLA research itself to include such topics as the position of English in the world and the power of native speakers over their language.

1.2. Common Assumptions of Language Teaching

Focusing Question

- Answer the questionnaire in Box 1.1 to find out your assumptions about language teaching.

Keywords

first language: chronologically the first language that a child learns.

second language: 'A language acquired by a person in addition to his mother tongue' (UNESCO, 1953).

native speaker: a person who still speaks the language they learnt in childhood, often thought of as monolingual.

Glosses on teaching methods are provided at the end of this chapter.

During the last quarter of the nineteenth century, a revolution took place that affected much of the language teaching used in the twentieth century. The revolt was primarily against the stultifying methods of grammatical explanation and translation of texts which were then popular. (In this chapter we will use 'method' in the traditional way to describe a particular way of teaching with its own techniques and tasks; Chapter 11 uses the more general term 'style'.) In its place the great pioneers of the new language teaching such as Henry Sweet and Otto Jespersen emphasised the spoken language and the naturalness of language learning and insisted on the importance of using the second language in the classroom rather than the first (Howatt, 2004). These beliefs are largely still with us today, either explicitly instilled into teachers or just taken for granted. The questionnaire in Box 1.1 tests the extent to which the reader actually believes in four of these common assumptions.

Box 1.1 Assumptions of Language Teaching

Tick the extent to which you agree or disagree with these assumptions

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. Students learn best through spoken, not written language.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Teachers and students should use the second language rather than the first language in the classroom.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Teachers should avoid explicit discussion of grammar.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. The aim of language teaching is to make students like native speakers.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

4 Background to SLA Research and Teaching

If you agreed with most of the above statements, then you share the common assumptions of teachers over the past 130 years. Let us spell them out in more detail.

Assumption 1. The Basis for Teaching Is the Spoken, Not the Written Language

One of the keynotes of the nineteenth century revolution in language teaching was the emphasis on the spoken language, partly because many of its advocates were phoneticians. The English curriculum in Cuba for example insists on 'The principle of the primacy of spoken language' (Cuban Ministry of Education, 1999). The teaching methods within which speech was most dominant were the audiolingual and audiovisual methods, which presented spoken language from tape before the students saw the written form. Later methods have continued to emphasise the spoken language. Communication in the communicative method is usually through speech rather than writing. The Total Physical Response (TPR) method uses spoken, not written, commands and storytelling, not story reading. Even in the task-based learning approach, Ellis (2003, p. 6) points out 'The literature on tasks, both research-based or pedagogic, assumes that tasks are directed at oral skills, particularly speaking'. The amount of teaching time that teachers pay to pronunciation far outweighs that given to spelling.

The importance of speech has been reinforced by those linguists who claim that speech is the primary form of language and that writing depends on speech. Few teaching methods in the twentieth century saw speech and writing as being equally important, certainly at the early stages. The problem with this assumption is that written language has distinct characteristics of its own which are not just pale reflections of the spoken language, as we see in Chapter 5. To quote Michael Halliday (Halliday and Matthiesen, 2013, p. 7), 'writing is not the representation of speech sound': it is a parallel way of expressing meaning with its own grammar, vocabulary and conventions. Vital as the spoken language may be, it should not divert attention from those aspects of writing that are crucial for students. Spelling mistakes for instance probably count more against an L2 user in everyday life than a foreign accent.

Assumption 2. Teachers and Students Should Use the Second Language Rather than the First Language in the Classroom

The emphasis on the second language in the classroom was also part of the revolt against the older methods by the late nineteenth century methodologists, most famously through the Direct Method and the Berlitz Method with their rejection of translation as a teaching technique. The use of the first language in the classroom is still seen as undesirable whether in

England—‘The natural use of the target language for virtually all communication is a sure sign of a good modern language course’ (DES, 1990, p. 58)—or in Japan—‘In principle English should be selected for foreign language activities’ (MEXT, 2011). This advice is echoed in almost every teaching manual: ‘the need to have them practicing English (rather than their own language) remains paramount’ (Harmer, 2007, p. 129). One reason sometimes put forward for avoiding the first language is that children learning their first language do not have a second language available, which is irrelevant in itself—infants don’t play golf but we teach it to adults. Another argument is that the students should keep the two languages separate in their minds rather than linking them together; this adopts a compartmentalised view of languages in the same mind, called coordinate bilingualism, not supported by SLA research, which mostly stresses the continual interplay between the two languages, as we see everywhere in this book. Nevertheless many English classes justifiably avoid the first language for practical reasons, whether because students have different first languages or because a native speaker teacher does not know the students’ first language. This topic is developed further in Chapter 8.

Assumption 3. Teachers Should Avoid Explicit Discussion of Grammar

The ban on teaching grammar to students explicitly also formed part of the rejection of the old-style methods. Grammar could be practised through drills or incorporated within communicative exercises but should not be explained to students. While grammatical rules can be demonstrated through substitution tables or through situational cues, actual rules should not be mentioned. The old arguments against grammatical explanation were both the question of conscious understanding—knowing some aspect of language consciously is no guarantee that you can use it in speech—and the processing time involved—speaking by consciously using all the grammatical rules means each sentence may take several minutes to produce, as those of us who learnt Latin by this method will bear witness. Chapter 2 describes how grammar has recently made a minor comeback.

Assumption 4. The Aim of Language Teaching Is to Make Students Like Native Speakers

One of the assumptions that has been taken for granted is that the role model for language students is the native speaker. Virtually all teachers, students and bilinguals have measured success by how closely a learner gets to a native speaker, in grammar, vocabulary and particularly pronunciation. David Stern (1983, p. 341) puts it clearly: ‘The native speaker’s “competence” or “proficiency” or “knowledge of the language” is a necessary point

of reference for the second language proficiency concept used in language teaching'. Coursebooks are overwhelmingly based on native language speakers; examinations compare students with native speakers. Passing for a native is the ultimate test of success. Like all the best assumptions, people so take this for granted that they can be mortally offended if it is brought out into the open and they are asked 'Why do you want to be a native speaker in any case?' No other possibility than the native speaker can be entertained.

Many of these background assumptions are questioned by SLA research and have sometimes led to undesirable consequences. Assumption 1 that students learn best through spoken language leads to undervaluing the features specific to written language, as we see in Chapter 5. Assumption 2 that the L1 should be minimised in the classroom goes against the integrity of the L2 user's mind, to be discussed later in this chapter and in Chapter 8. Assumption 3 that grammar should not be taught explicitly implies a particular model of grammar and of learning, rather than the many alternatives shown in Chapter 2. The native speaker assumption 4 has come under increasing attack in recent years, as described in Chapter 8, on the grounds that a native speaker goal is not appropriate in all circumstances and that it is unattainable by the vast majority of students. Even if these 130-year-old assumptions are usually unstated, they continue to be part of the basis of language teaching however the winds of fashion may blow.

1.3. What Is Second Language Acquisition Research?

Focusing Questions

- Do you know anybody who is good at languages? Why do you think this is so?
- Do you think that everybody learns a second language in roughly the same way?

Keywords

Contrastive Analysis (CA): this research method compared the descriptions of two languages in grammar or pronunciation to discover the differences between them; these were then seen as difficulties for the students to overcome. Note the abbreviation CA is also often used as well both for Conversation Analysis and for the Communicative Approach to language teaching.

Error Analysis (EA): this research method studied the language produced by L2 learners to establish its peculiarities, which it tried to explain in terms of the first language and other sources.

As this book is based on SLA research, the obvious opening question is 'What is SLA research?' People have been interested in the acquisition of second languages since at least the Ancient Greeks, but the discipline itself only came into being about 1970, gathering together language teachers, psychologists and linguists. Its roots were in 1950s studies of Contrastive Analysis which compared the first and second languages to predict students' difficulties—if your first language lacks say the 'th' sound /ð/ in 'this' then you may have problems with English /ð/— and in the 1960s Chomskyan models of first language acquisition which saw children as creators of their own languages—most English children produce sentences like 'more up' that are not part of their parents' grammar; they create a grammar system of their own. Together these led to the concentration in SLA research on the learner as the central active element in the learning situation.

In its early days, SLA research focussed much attention on the actual language the learner produced. The technique of Error Analysis looked at the differences between the learner's speech and that of native speakers (Corder, 1981); it tried to find out what learner language was actually like. The next wave of research tried to establish the stages through which the learners' language developed, say the sequence for acquiring grammatical items like 'to', 'the' and '-ing', to be discussed in the next chapter. Then people started to get interested in the qualities that the learners brought to second language acquisition and the choices they made when learning and using the language. And they started to pay attention to the whole context in which the learners are placed, whether the temporary context of the conversation or the more permanent situation in their own society or the society whose language they are learning.

Nowadays SLA research is an extremely rich and diverse subject, drawing on aspects of linguistics, psychology, sociology and education. Hence it has many aspects and theories that are often incompatible with each other. Most introductory books on second language acquisition attest the great interest that SLA researchers have in grammar. Yet many researchers are concerned exclusively with phonology, syntax or vocabulary, with their own specialist books and conferences. And still other groups are concerned with how Vygotsky's ideas link to modern language teaching or how conversational analysis and complexity theory relate to second language acquisition. Much teaching-oriented SLA research now takes place at the interface between cognitive psychology and educational research called 'usage-based learning' by Michael Tomasello (2003). Some SLA research is intended to be applied to teaching: 'One of the fundamental goals of SLA research is to facilitate and expedite the SLA process' (Larsen-Freeman and Long, 1991, p. 6). However most second language acquisition research either is 'pure' study of second language acquisition for its own sake or uses second language acquisition as a testing ground for linguistic theories. While many of the first SLA

8 Background to SLA Research and Teaching

researchers came out of language teaching or psychology, nowadays probably most come out of SLA research itself as it has established itself as a discipline.

A working definition of SLA research would then see it as concerned with the acquisition or use of any aspect of a language other than the native language, thus including not only second languages but also any further languages. The present book tries to be eclectic in presenting a variety of areas and approaches that seem relevant for language teaching rather than a single unified partisan approach. Here are some ‘facts’ that SLA research has discovered; some of them will be explained and applied in later chapters; others are still a mystery.

- *English-speaking primary school children who are taught Italian for one hour a week learn to read better in English than other children.*

Even encountering a second language for one hour a week can have useful effects on other aspects of the child’s mind, potentially an important reason for teaching children another language. Language teaching affects more than the language in a person’s mind.

- *People who speak a second language are more creative and flexible at problem-solving than monolinguals.*

Research clearly shows L2 users have advantages over monolinguals in several cognitive areas; they think differently and perceive the world differently. These benefits are discussed in Chapter 8.

- *Ten days after a road accident, a bilingual Moroccan could speak French but not Arabic; the next day Arabic but not French; the next day she went back to fluent French and poor Arabic; three months later she could speak both.*

The relationship between the two languages in the brain is now starting to be understood by neurolinguists yet the diversity of effects from brain injury is still largely inexplicable. The effects on language are different in almost every bilingual patient; some aphasics recover the first language they learnt, some the language they were using at the time of injury, some the language they used most, and so on.

- *Bengali-speaking children in Tower Hamlets in London go through stages in learning verb inflections; at five, they know only ‘ing’ (‘walking’), at seven they also know /t/ (‘walked’), /ɪd/ (‘played’) and /et/ (‘ate’—irregular past tenses); at nine they still lack ‘hit’ (‘zero’ past where the present form is unchanged).*

L2 learners go through similar stages of development of a second language, whether in grammar or pronunciation, as we shall see in other chapters. This has been confirmed in almost all studies looking at sequence of acquisition. Yet, as in this case, we are still not sure of the reason for the sequence.

Box 1.2 Students' Views: How Do You Think Language Teachers Can Benefit from Second Language Acquisition Research?

Saudi-Arabian student: Having the best methods and theories of English teaching and acquisition in hand may help Saudi teachers a lot in starting from what others have reached in this research field in order to efficiently apply these methods in their teaching.

Polish student: I guess it might provide us with interesting tips on how to improve and streamline our teaching methods. It could give ideas how to compose a lesson, i.e. what kind of activities to involve, what content.

Japanese student: I'm not sure about that because SLA is more about theory. Every student is different and there are times that the theory doesn't match the pupils. But knowing the basic structure of SLA is interesting and allows teachers to think what and how students learn the language effectively.

Chinese student: Second language acquisition research is beneficial to foreign language teaching practice for it reveals the similarities and differences between L1 language learning and L2 language learning as well as the unique characteristics of L2 learners.

- *The timing of the voicing of /t~d/ sounds in 'ten/den' is different in French people who speak English and French people who don't.*

The knowledge of the first language is affected in subtle ways by the second language that you know, so that there are many giveaways to the fact you speak other languages, whether in grammar, pronunciation or vocabulary. L2 users no longer have the same knowledge of their first language as the monolingual native speaker.

- *L2 learners rapidly learn the appropriate pronunciations for their own gender, for instance that men tend to pronounce the '-ing' ending of the English continuous form going as '-in' /ɪn/ but women tend to use '-ing' /ɪŋ/.*

10 Background to SLA Research and Teaching

People quickly pick up elements that are important to their identity in the second language say men's versus women's speech—even if the teacher is probably unaware what is being conveyed. A second language is a complex new addition to one's roles in the world.

- *When asked about a fish-tank they have been shown, Chinese people who also speak English will remember the fish more than the plants to a greater extent than Chinese monolinguals.*

Different cultures think in different ways. Our cultural attitudes may be changed by the language we are acquiring; in this case the Chinese attention to 'background' plants is altered by impact with the English attention to 'foreground' fish.

1.4. What a Teacher Can Expect from SLA Research

Focusing Questions

- How do you think SLA research could help your teaching?
- Have you seen it applied to language teaching before?
- Who do you think should decide what happens in the classroom—the government, the head teacher, the teacher, the students, the parents, or someone else?

Let us take three examples of the contribution SLA research can make to language teaching: understanding the students' contribution to learning, understanding how teaching techniques and methods work, and understanding the overall goals of language teaching.

Understanding the Students' Contribution to Learning

All successful teaching depends upon learning; there is no point in providing entertaining, lively, well-constructed language lessons if students do not learn from them. The proof of the teaching is in the learning. One crucial factor in L2 learning is what the students bring with them into the classroom. With the exception of young bilingual children, L2 learners have fully formed personalities and minds when they start learning the second language, and these have profound effects on their ways of learning and on how successful they are. SLA research, for example, has established that the students' diverse motivations for learning the second language affect them powerfully, as we see in Chapter 7. Some students see learning the second language as extending the repertoire of what they can do, others see it as a threat.

The different ways in which students tackle learning also affect their success. What is happening in the class is not equally productive for all the

students because their minds work in different ways. The differences between individuals do not disappear when they come in the classroom door. Students base what they do on their previous experience of learning and using language. They do not start from scratch without any background or predisposition to learn language in one way or another. Students also have much in common by virtue of possessing the same human minds. For instance, SLA research predicts that, however advanced they are, students will find that their memory works less well in the new language, whether they are trying to remember a phone number or the contents of an article. SLA research helps in understanding how apparently similar students react differently to the same teaching technique, while revealing the problems that all students share.

Understanding How Teaching Methods and Techniques Work

Any teaching incorporates a view of L2 learning and of language, whether implicitly or explicitly. Grammar-translation teaching for example emphasises explanations of grammatical points because this fits in with its view that L2 learning is the acquisition of conscious knowledge. Communicative teaching methods require the students to talk to each other because they see L2 learning as growing out of the give-and-take of communication. For the most part these ideas of learning have been developed independently from SLA research. They are not based, say, on research into how learners use grammatical explanations or how they learn by talking to each other. More information about how learners actually learn helps the teacher to make any method more effective and can put the teacher's hunches on a firmer basis.

The reasons why a teaching technique works or does not work depend on many factors. A teacher who wants to use a particular technique will benefit by knowing what it implies in terms of language learning and language processing, the type of student for whom it is most appropriate, and the ways in which it fits into the classroom situation. Suppose the teacher wants to use a task in which the students spontaneously exchange information. This implies that students are learning by communicating, that they are prepared to speak out in the classroom and that the educational context allows for learning from fellow students rather than from the teacher alone. SLA research has something to say about all of these, as we shall see.

Understanding the Goals of Language Teaching

The reasons the second language is being taught depend upon overall educational goals, which vary from one country to another and from one period to another. One avowed goal of much language teaching is to help people to think better—brain-training and logical thinking; another is appreciation of serious literature; another the student's increased self-awareness and maturity; another the appreciation of other cultures and races; another communication

with people in other countries, and so on. Many of these have been explored in particular SLA research. For example, the goal of brain-training is supported by evidence that people who know two languages think more flexibly than monolinguals (Landry, 1974) and that knowing two languages helps to stave off the effects of Alzheimer's disease for around five years (Bialystok, Craik and Freedman, 2007). This information is vital when considering the viability and implementation of goals for a particular group of students. SLA research can help define the goals of language teaching, assess how achievable they may be, and contribute to their achievement. These issues are debated in Chapter 9.

SLA research is a scientific discipline that tries to describe how people learn and use another language. It cannot properly decide issues that are outside its domain. While it may contribute to the understanding of teaching goals, it is itself neutral among them. It is not for the teacher, the methodologist, or any other outsider to dictate whether a language should be taught for communication, for brain-training, or whatever, but the responsibility of the society or the individual student to decide. One country specifies that groupwork must be used in the classroom because it encourages democracy. Another bans any reference to English-speaking culture in textbooks because English is for international communication, not for developing relationships with English-speaking countries. A third sees language teaching as a way of developing honesty and the values of good citizenship; a keynote speaker at a TESOL conference proclaimed that the purpose of TESOL was to create good American citizens (to the consternation of the British and Canadians present in the audience). SLA research as a discipline neither commends nor denies the value of these goals, since they depend on moral or political values rather than science. But it can offer advice on how these goals may best be achieved and what their costs may be, particularly in balancing the needs of society and of the individual.

Teachers need to see the classroom from many angles, not just from that of SLA research. The choice of what to do in a particular lesson depends upon the teacher's assessment of the factors involved in teaching *those* students in *that* situation. SLA research reveals some of the strengths and weaknesses of a particular teaching method or technique and it provides information that can influence and guide teaching. It does not provide a magic solution to teaching problems, in the form of a patented method with an attractive new brand name.

Insights from SLA research can help teachers whatever their methodological slant. Partly this is at the general level of understanding; knowing what language learning consists of colours the teacher's awareness of everything that happens in the classroom and heightens the teacher's empathy with the student. Partly it is at the more specific level of the choice of teaching methods, the construction of teaching materials, or the design and execution of teaching techniques. The links between SLA research and language teaching made here are suggestions of what *can* be done rather than accounts of what *has* been done or orders about what *should* be done. Because SLA research is

still in its early days, some of the ideas presented here are based on a solid, agreed-upon foundation; others are more controversial or speculative.

While this book has been written for language teachers, this is not the only way in which SLA research can influence language teaching. Other routes for the application of SLA research include:

- 1) informing the students themselves about SLA research so that they can use it in their learning. This has been tried in books such as *How to Study Foreign Languages* (Lewis, 1999) and *How to Be a More Successful Language Learner* (Rubin and Thompson, 1982). I have myself tried telling students about the Good Language Learner strategies, discussed in Chapter 6, with the aim of giving them a choice of things to do rather than imposing any particular strategy upon them. An interesting book to read on the personal experience of relating SLA research to learning another language is *Dreaming in Hindi: Life in Translation* (Rich, 2010).
- 2) basing language examinations and tests on SLA research, a vast potential application but not one that has yet been tried on any scale, examination designers and testers usually following their own traditions. A test that was based say on the typical stages of second language acquisition described in Chapter 2 would be quite different from anything that currently exists.
- 3) devising syllabuses and curricula based on SLA research so that the content of teaching can fit the students better. We shall meet some attempts at this in various chapters here, but again SLA research has not usually been the basis for syllabuses, even for the all-pervasive Common European Framework (2008).
- 4) writing course materials based on SLA research. While some coursebook writers do indeed try to use ideas from SLA research, most ignore them. For example despite the popularity among language teachers of Stephen Krashen's model of second language acquisition, to be outlined in Chapter 10, no-one seems to have written coursebooks directly based on it.

Often these other indirect routes may have a greater influence on teaching than the teacher. Teachers after all are seldom at liberty to follow their own paths in the classroom but have to follow those mapped out by governments, head-teachers, coursebook writers and examination boards.

1.5. Some Background Ideas of SLA Research

Focusing Questions

- Do you feel you keep your two languages separate or do they blend together in your mind at some point?
- Do you think students should aim to become as native-like as possible?

Keywords

multi-competence: the overall system of a mind or a community that uses more than one language.

the independent language assumption: the language of the L2 learner can be considered a language in its own right rather than a defective version of the target language (sometimes called ‘interlanguage’).

L2 user and L2 learner: an L2 user uses the second language for real-life purposes; an L2 learner is acquiring a second language rather than using it actively in everyday life.

second and foreign language: broadly speaking, in British usage, a *second* language is for immediate use within the same country, a *foreign* language is for long-term future use in other countries.

When SLA research became an independent discipline, it established certain principles that underlie much of the research to be discussed later. This section presents some of these core ideas.

SLA Research Is Independent of Language Teaching

Earlier approaches to L2 learning often asked the question: which teaching method gives the best results? Is an oral method better than a translation method? A communicative method better than a situational one? Putting the question in this form accepts the status quo of what already happens in teaching rather than looking at underlying principles of learning: the question should be ‘Is what happens in teaching right?’ rather than ‘What should happen in teaching?’ A more logical sequence is to ask: how do people *learn* languages? Then teaching methods can be evaluated in the light of what has been discovered and teaching can be based on adequate ideas of learning. The first step is to study learning itself, the second step to see how teaching relates to learning, the sequence mostly followed in this book, except in Chapter 11 which goes in the opposite direction from established language teaching methods to learning research.

The teacher should be aware from the start that there is no easy link between SLA research and language teaching methods, despite the claims made in some coursebooks or by some researchers. The language teaching approaches of the past fifty years have by and large originated from teaching methodologists, not from SLA research. The communicative approach for example was only remotely linked to the theories of language acquisition of the 1960s and 1970s; it came chiefly out of the insight that language teaching should be tailored to students’ real-world communication needs. SLA research does not provide a magic solution that can instantly be applied to the contemporary classroom so much as a set of ideas that teachers can try out for themselves.

In language teaching methodology a difference is often made between *second* language teaching, which teaches the language for immediate use within the

same country, say the teaching of French to immigrants in France, and *foreign* language teaching, which teaches the language for long-term future use and may take place anywhere but most often in countries where it is not an everyday medium, say the teaching of French in England. The distinction involves two dimensions. One is what the language is used for: a second language meets a real-life need, say to communicate with particular people—a Chinese student using English in Newcastle upon Tyne—while a foreign language fulfils no current need—a Newcastle schoolchild learning French. The other dimension is where it is spoken: a second language is learnt among native speakers—German in Berlin; a foreign language is learnt in a place where it is not widely used—German in Japan. According to De Groot and Van Hell (2005, p. 25), there is also a difference between North American SLA usage, where a language that is not native to a country can be either ‘foreign’ or ‘second’, and British usage, where ‘foreign’ means not spoken in a country and ‘second’ means not ‘native’ but used widely as medium of communication, say English in Nigeria.

While the foreign language/second language distinction is often convenient, it cannot be taken for granted that learners in these two situations necessarily learn in two different ways without proper research evidence. Indeed the problem is that this two-way division oversimplifies the complexity and diversity in the world. We see later that there are a host of different second language learning situations, not just these two. Much SLA discussion either rejects the second/foreign distinction or plays safe by referring to ‘the learner of a second or foreign language’ (*Common European Framework of Reference for Languages*, 2008, p. 12).

The term ‘second language (L2) learning’ is used in this book to include all learning of languages other than the native language in whatever situation or for whatever purpose: second simply means ‘other than first’. This is the sense of ‘second language’ defined by UNESCO (1953): ‘A language acquired by a person in addition to his mother tongue’. Nor does this book make a distinction between language ‘acquisition’ and language ‘learning’, as Stephen Krashen does (e.g. Krashen, 1981a). So ‘second language’ is a general term for any language or languages the person knows in addition to their first language. There is an unresolved issue about how to count languages. ‘First, second . . .’ is a matter of ordinal sequence, first coming before second; ‘Joseph Conrad’s first language was Polish, second language French, third language English’. But inevitably ‘first’ conveys something that has priority: ‘first class degree’, ‘first minister’, ‘first rate’ etc. So ‘second’ language learning conveys something that is lower in status. This is not the same as cardinal counting, ‘One, two, . . .’, which concerns how many exist in a group: ‘Joseph Conrad spoke three languages: Polish, French and English’. It is an odd quirk that the ‘L2’ in ‘L2 learner’ is a different form of counting than in ‘second language learner’. The book *Language Two* (Dulay, Burt and Krashen, 1982) is in principle about something different from the book *Understanding Second Language Acquisition* (Ortega, 2009). One danger with the ordinal meaning of ‘second’ is that it implies something came first, but many children grow up with two languages—early simultaneous bilingualism. It is a moot point how ‘second’

can be applied to either of their languages; it is 'bilingualism as a first language' as Swain (1972) puts it. And it clearly does not work if literacy is taken into account—the writing system a child acquires may not be the one for their first language.

A more idiosyncratic use here is the distinction between 'L2 user' and 'L2 learner'. An L2 'user' is anybody making an actual use of the second language for real-life purposes outside the classroom; an L2 'learner' is anybody acquiring a second language. In some cases a person is both user and learner—when an L2 learner of English in London steps out of the classroom, they immediately become an L2 user of English. The distinction is important for many countries where learners do not become users for many years, if ever. The prime motivation for the term 'L2 user' is, however, the feeling that it is demeaning to call someone who has functioned in an L2 environment for years a learner rather than a user, as if their task were never finished. We would not dream of calling a twenty-year-old adult native speaker an L1 learner, so we should not call a person who has been using a second language for twenty years an L2 learner.

The different spheres of SLA research and language teaching mean that they often use different concepts of language, most dangerously when both fields use the same terms with different meanings. To SLA researchers for instance the term 'grammar' mostly means something in people's minds which they use for constructing sentences; to teachers it means a set of rules on paper which can be explained to students; to the person in the street it means a set of *don'ts* imposed by authority. The type of grammar used in SLA research has little to do with the tried and true collection of grammatical ideas for teaching that teachers have evolved, as will be illustrated in the next chapter, and even less to do with popular ideas of what *not* to say. It is perfectly possible for instance for the same person to say 'I hate grammar' (as a way of teaching by explaining rules) and 'I think grammar is very important' (as the mental system that organises language in the students' minds). It is dangerous to assume that words used by teachers every day, such as 'vocabulary', 'noun', 'motivation' or 'linguist', have the same meaning in the context of SLA research.

L2 Learning Is Independent of L1 Acquisition

Teaching methods have often been justified in terms of how children learn their first language without investigating L2 learning directly. The audio-lingual method of teaching for instance was primarily taken from particular ideas of how children learn their first language based on behaviourist ideas from psychology and structuralist ideas from linguistics, not from SLA research.

But there is no intrinsic reason why learning a second language should be the same as learning a first. Learning a first language is, in Michael Halliday's memorable phrase, 'learning how to mean' (Halliday, 1975)—discovering that

language is used for relating to other people and for communicating ideas. Language, according to Michael Tomasello (1999), requires the ability to recognise that other people have points of view. People learning a second language already know how to mean and know that other people have minds of their own. L2 learning is inevitably different in this respect from L1 learning, except of course for the early simultaneous bilingual. The similarities between learning the first and second languages have to be established rather than taken for granted, as we will see in Chapter 10. In some respects the two forms of learning may well be rather similar, in others quite different—after all the outcome is often very different. Evidence about how the child learns a first language has to be interpreted with caution in L2 learning and seldom in itself provides a basis for language teaching.

L2 learners in fact are different from children learning a first language since there is already one language present in their minds. There is no way that the L2 learner can become a monolingual native speaker *by definition*. However strong the similarities may be between L1 acquisition and L2 learning, the presence of the first language is the inescapable difference in L2 learning. So our beliefs about how children learn their first language cannot be automatically transferred to a second language; some may work, some may not. Most teaching methods have claimed in some sense to be based on the ‘natural’ way of acquiring language, usually meaning how monolingual L1 children do it; however, they have very different views of what L1 children do, whether derived from the theories of language learning current when they came into being or from general popular beliefs about L1 acquisition, say ‘Children are good at imitation therefore L2 learners should have to imitate sentences’—‘imitation’ is almost a taboo word in L1 acquisition now, simply because the child so rarely seems to imitate in a straightforward way.

L2 Learning Is More Than the Transfer of the First Language

One view of L2 learning sees its crucial element as the transfer of aspects of the first language to the second language. The first language helps learners when it has elements in common with the second language and hinders them when they differ. Spanish speakers may leave out the subject of the sentence when speaking English, saying ‘Is raining’ rather than ‘It’s raining’, while French speakers do not. The explanation is that subjects may be omitted in Spanish, but they may not be left out in French. Nor is it usually difficult to decide from accent alone whether a foreigner speaking English comes from France, Brazil or Japan.

But the importance of such transfer has to be looked at with an open mind. Various aspects of L2 learning need to be investigated before it can be decided how and when the first language is involved in the learning of the second. Though transfer from the first language indeed turns out to be important, often in unexpected ways, its role needs to be established through properly balanced research rather than the first language taking the blame for everything that

goes wrong in learning a second. And indeed modern researchers have gone beyond how the L1 affects the L2 to how the L2 affects the L1, the L2 the L3, and so on. Some for instance claim that the L1 is most important for the L3, others the L2.

Learners Have Independent Language Systems of Their Own

Suppose a student learning English says 'Me go no school'. Many teachers would see it as roughly the same as the native sentence, 'I am not going to school', even if they would not draw the student's attention to it overtly. In other words, this is what the student might say if he or she were a native speaker. So this student is 'really' trying to produce a present continuous tense 'am going', a first person subject 'I', a negative 'not', and an adverbial 'to school', ending up with the native version 'I am not going to school'. But something has gone drastically wrong. Perhaps the student has not yet encountered the appropriate forms in English or perhaps he or she is transferring constructions from the first language. The assumption is that the student's sentence should be compared to one produced by a native speaker. Sometimes this comparison is justified, as native-like speech is often a goal for the student.

But this is what many students *want* to be, not what they *are* at the moment. It is judging the students by what they are *not*—native speakers. SLA research insists that learners have the right to be judged by the standards appropriate for them, not by those used for natives. 'Me go no school' is an example of L2 learner language that shows what is going in their minds. 'Me' shows that they do not distinguish 'I' and 'me', unlike native English; 'no' that negation consists for them of adding a negative word after the verb, unlike its usual position before the verb; 'go' that they have no grammatical endings such as '-ing'; and so on. All of these apparent 'mistakes' conform to regular patterns in the students' own knowledge of English; they are only wrong when measured against native speech. Their sentences relate to their own temporary language systems at the moment when they produce the sentence, not to the native's version of English.

However peculiar and limited they may be, learners' sentences come from the learners' own language systems; their L2 speech shows rules and patterns of its own. At each stage learners have their own language systems. The nature of these learner systems may be very different from that of the target language. Even if they are idiosyncratic and constantly changing, they are none the less systematic. The starting point for SLA research is the learner's own language system. This has been called the 'independent language assumption': learners are not wilfully distorting the native system but are inventing a system of their own. Finding out how students learn means starting from the curious rules and structures which they invent for themselves as they go along—their 'interlanguage', as Larry Selinker (1972) put it. This is shown in the following figure:

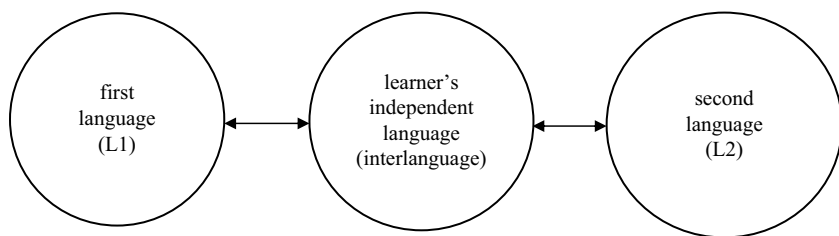


Figure 1.1 The learner's independent language (interlanguage).

The interlanguage concept had a major impact on teaching techniques in the 1970s. Teaching methods that used drills and grammatical explanations had insisted on the seriousness of the students' mistakes. A mistake in an audiolingual drill meant the student had not properly learnt the 'habit' of speaking; a mistake in a grammatical exercise meant the student had not understood the rule. The concept of the learner's own system suddenly liberated the classroom and in part paved the way for the communicative language teaching methods of the 1970s and 1980s and the task-based learning popular from the 1990s onwards. Learners' sentences reflect their temporary language systems rather than their imperfect grasp of the target language. If a student makes a 'mistake', it is not the fault of the teacher or of the materials or even of the student, but an inevitable and natural part of the learning process. Teachers were now liberated so that they could use teaching activities in which students talked to each other rather than to them, because the students did not need the teacher's vigilant eye to spot what they were doing wrong. Their mistakes were minor irritants rather than major hazards. They could now work in pairs or groups as the teacher did not have to continuously supervise the students' speech in order to pinpoint and correct their mistakes.

In my own view, not yet shared by the SLA research field as a whole, the independent grammars assumption does not go far enough. On the one hand we have the user's knowledge of their first language, on the other their interlanguage in the second language. But these languages coexist in the same mind; one person knows both. Hence we need a name to refer to the overall knowledge that combines both the first language and the L2 interlanguage, namely 'multi-competence' (Cook, 1992)—the knowledge of two language systems in the same mind—shown in the figure below. The lack of this concept has meant much SLA research has still treated the two languages separately rather than as different facets of the same person, as we see from time to time in the rest of this book.

As this chapter has illustrated, one of the snags in discussing language teaching is the very word 'language', which has many meanings to many people. The opening sentence of this chapter said that 'language is at the centre of human life'; here 'language' is an abstract uncountable noun used for a general property of human life (Lang₁), like 'vision'; this is the meaning at stake in

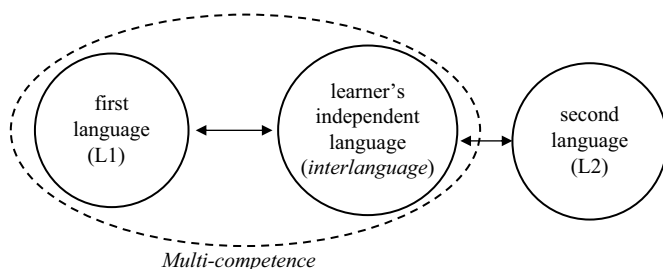


Figure 1.2 Multi-competence.

discussions of whether humans are the only species that can use language. The next paragraph of this chapter said ‘Some people are able to do some or all of this in more than one language’; here ‘language’ is a countable noun—there’s more than one of it (Lang₂); this meaning covers the English language, the French language etc, that is to say language is an abstraction describing one particular group of people, often a nation, rather than another. Page 5 said ‘knowing some aspect of language consciously is no guarantee that you can use it in speech’; here ‘language’ has shifted meaning to the psychological knowledge in an individual human mind, what Chomsky (1965) meant by ‘linguistic competence’ (Lang₅). Page 7 talks about ‘the actual language the learner produced’, where ‘language’ now means the actual sentences that someone has said or written (Lang₃). Later, page 17 commented that ‘language is used for relating to other people’; ‘language’ also means something that is used for social reasons as part of society (Lang₄). Youtube has a video explaining these meanings (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bCglGihT_Cc).

Box 1.3 Meanings of ‘Language’ (Cook, 2010a)

- Lang₁: a representation system known by human beings—‘human language’
- Lang₂: an abstract entity—‘the English language’
- Lang₃: a set of sentences—everything that has or could be said—‘the language of the Bible’
- Lang₄: the possession of a community—‘the language of French people’
- Lang₅: the knowledge in the mind of an individual—‘I have learnt French as a foreign language for eight years’
- Lang₆: a form of action—‘I sentence you to twenty years imprisonment’

It is always important therefore when discussing language teaching and language acquisition to remember which meaning of ‘language’ we have in mind—and there are doubtless many more meanings one could find. Sometimes misunderstandings occur simply because people are using different

meanings without realising it. For example an individual native speaker may know the English language in the psychological sense, but this probably means they know only a fraction of the words in any dictionary of the English language; students often feel frustrated because they measure their knowledge of a language against the grammar-book and the dictionary (Lang₂) rather than against what an individual speaker knows (Lang₅).

Discussion Topics

- 1 What do *you* think is going on in the student's head when they are doing, say, a fill-in exercise? Have you ever checked to see if this is really the case?
- 2 In what ways are coursebooks a good source of information about what is going on in a classroom, and in what ways are they not?
- 3 Do your students share the language teaching goals you are practising or do you have to persuade them that they are right? Do you have a *right* to impose the goals you choose on them?
- 4 Why do you believe in the teaching method you use? What evidence do you have for its success?
- 5 Are there more similarities or dissimilarities between L1 acquisition and L2 learning?
- 6 What should an L2 speaker aim at if *not* the model of the native speaker?
- 7 What factors in a teaching technique do *you* think are most important?
- 8 What is wrong with the following sentences from students' essays? If you were their teacher, how would you correct them?
 - A Anyone doesn't need any deposit in my country to rent an apartment. (Korean student)
 - B I play squash so so and I wish in Sunday's morning arrange matches with a girl who plays like me. (Italian)
 - C Everytimes I concentrate to speak out, don't know why always had Chinese in my mind. (Chinese)
 - D Raelly I am so happy. I wold like to give you my best congratulate. and I wold like too to till you my real apologise, becuse my mother is very sik. (Arabic)
 - E I please you very much you allow me to stay with you this Christmas. (Spanish)

Further Reading

Good technical introductions to L2 learning and bilingualism can be found in Mitchell, Myles and Marsden (2012), *Second Language Learning Theories*, and VanPatten and Williams (2006), *Theories in Second Language Acquisition*; an elementary introduction to second language acquisition research can be found in Cook and Singleton (2014), *Key Topics in Second Language Acquisition*. Useful books with similar purposes to this one but covering slightly

different approaches to second language acquisition are: Scott (2009), *Double Talk: Deconstructing Monolingualism in Classroom Second Language Learning* and Ortega (2009), *Understanding Second Language Acquisition*. Some useful resources to follow up SLA and teaching on the web are the *European Second Language Association* (EUROSLA) at <http://eurosla.org/> and *Dave's EFL Café* at <http://www.eslcafe.com/>. The assumptions underlying traditional methods are discussed further in Cook (2010b), available at <http://www.viviancook.uk/SLLandLT/SLL<5thed.html>.

A Quick Glossary of Language Teaching Methods Relevant to the Book

These are explained more fully in Chapter 11, which also has a glossary of language teaching techniques.

audiolingual teaching: combined a learning theory based on ideas of habit-formation and practice with a view of language as patterns and structures based on structural linguistics; it chiefly made students repeat sentences recorded on tape and practice structures in repetitive drills. Originating in the USA in the 1940s, its peak of popularity was probably the 1960s, though it was not much used in British-influenced EFL. (Note: it is not usually abbreviated to ALM since these initials belong to a particular trade-marked method).

audiovisual teaching: presented visual images to show the meaning of spoken dialogues and believed in treating language as a whole rather than dividing it up into different aspects. Teaching relied on filmstrips and taped dialogues for repetition. It emerged chiefly in France in the 1960s and 1970s and was highly influential in modern language teaching in England.

Bilingual Method (Dodson, 1967): this little-known method used in Wales depended on both languages being present in the classroom, in that meaning was conveyed by translation, not word by word but by gist.

communicative teaching: based language teaching on the functions that the second language had for the student and on the meanings they wanted to express, leading to teaching exercises that made the students communicate with each other in various ways through role-play and information gap exercises. From the mid-1970s onwards this became the most influential way of teaching around the globe, not just for English, so that it is now the traditional language teaching method virtually taken for granted.

Community Language Learning (CLL): is a teaching method in which students create conversations in the second language from the outset, using the teacher as a translation resource.

Direct Method: is the name for any method that relies on the second language throughout. It can be applied to almost all the language teaching methods recommended since the 1880s.

grammar-translation method: this traditional academic style of teaching placed heavy emphasis on grammar explanation, translation exercises and the use of literary texts.

New Concurrent Method (Jacobson and Faltis, 1990): this required teachers to switch languages between L1 and L2 at carefully planned key points chosen by topic, function, etc.

reciprocal language teaching: is a teaching method in which pairs of students alternately teach each other their languages in the 'language of the day'.

situational teaching: some teaching uses 'situation' to mean physical demonstration in the classroom; other teaching uses it to mean situations in which the student will use the language in the world outside the classroom.

Suggestopedia (Lozanov, 1978): is a teaching method aimed at avoiding the students' block about language learning through means such as listening to music.

task-based learning (TBL): is an approach that sees learning as arising from particular tasks the students do in the classroom and has increasingly been seen as a logical development from communicative language teaching.

2 Learning and Teaching Different Types of Grammar

A language has patterns and regularities that are used to convey meaning, some of which make up its grammar. One important aspect of grammar in most languages is the order of words, which is part of syntax: any speaker of English knows that ‘Mr Bean loves Teddy’ does not have the same meaning as ‘Teddy loves Mr Bean’. Another aspect of grammar consists of changes in the forms of words, part of morphology, more important in some languages than others—‘This bush flowered in May’ means something different from ‘These bushes flower in May’ because of the differences between ‘This/these’, ‘bush/bushes’ and ‘flowered/flower’. The Key Grammatical Terms section on p. 54 defines some grammatical terms.

Box 2.1 A Chinese Student’s View of Learning English Grammar

As for grammar, personally, it is the most tedious thing which I could not grasp completely till now, and what I can do is just to be corrected in written or spoken English by native speakers consistently. When I first encountered English grammar, it was not difficult but just a matter of memorising the key sentences and patterns by repeating and translating, then we would be drilled repeatedly with the same pattern to consolidate them in our mind. And when I was in secondary school, in order to make us understand grammar, the teacher would give us a plenty of drills to do like matching, gap filling and close testing. But the most important thing is, we still cannot grasp the grammar; though we correct the wrong answers in drills, we forget all the items after just a couple of days. Thus, it is a difficult thing for me to acquire grammar, however, developing a language sense is the sort of thing I get used to doing during my advanced English learning.

Many linguists consider grammar, made up of syntax ‘above’ the word and morphology ‘below’ the word, to be the central element in language in the Lang₅ sense of the knowledge in an individual mind, around which other elements such as pronunciation and vocabulary revolve. However important the

other components of language may be in themselves, what connects them is grammar—the mortar between the bricks. Chomsky calls grammar the ‘computational system’ of human language that relates sound and meaning, trivial in itself but impossible to manage without.

Grammar is the aspect of language that is most unique, having features that do not occur in other mental processes and that are not apparently found in animal languages; grammar is learnt in different ways from anything else that people learn. Or at least that is what most linguists say; some psychologists disagree, claiming that language is just an intersection of many other cognitive processes that have their own uses.

In some ways, as grammar is highly systematic, its effects are usually fairly obvious and frequent in people’s speech or writing, one reason why so much SLA research has concentrated on grammar. This chapter first looks at different types of grammar and then selects some areas of grammatical research into L2 learning to represent the main approaches.

2.1. What Is Grammar?

Focusing Questions

- What is grammar?
- How do you think it is learnt?
- How would you teach it?

Keywords

prescriptive grammar: grammar that ‘prescribes’ what people should or shouldn’t say: ‘you should not split the infinitive ‘to boldly go’.

traditional grammar: ‘school’ grammar largely concerned with labelling sentences with parts of speech: ‘nouns’, ‘verbs’ etc.

structural grammar: grammar concerned with how words go into phrases, phrases into sentences.

grammatical (linguistic) competence: the knowledge of structures or rules etc stored in a person’s mind.

Glosses on some grammatical terminology are given at the end of the chapter and appear on the website.

To explain what the term ‘grammar’ means in the context of L2 learning, it is easiest to start by eliminating what it does *not* mean.

Prescriptive Grammar

One familiar type of grammar is the rules found in schoolbooks, for example, the warnings against final prepositions in sentences, ‘This can’t be put up with’, or the diatribes in letters to the newspaper about split infinitives

such as the Star Trek motto ‘To boldly go where no-one has gone before’. This is called *prescriptive grammar* because it ‘prescribes’ what people ought to do rather than ‘describes’ what they actually do; it is the Highway Code through which the government tells us how to drive rather than observing what we actually do on the road. Modern grammarians have mostly avoided prescriptive grammar because they see their job as describing what the rules of language *are*, just as the physicist says what the laws of physics are. The grammarian has no more right to decree how people *should* speak than the physicist has to decree how electrons should move: their task is to describe what happens. Language is bound up with human lives in so many ways that it is easy to find reasons why some grammatical forms are ‘better’ than others, but these are based on criteria other than the grammar itself, mostly to do with social status; for example you shouldn’t say ‘ain’t’ because that’s what uneducated people say. The linguist’s duty is to decide what people actually say; after this has been carried out, others may decide that it would be better to change what people say. Hence all the other types of grammar discussed below try to describe the grammar that real people know and use, even if sometimes this claim is given no more than lip service.

Prescriptive grammar is all but irrelevant to the language teaching classroom. Since the 1960s people have believed that you should teach the language as it *is*, not as it *ought to be*, i.e. descriptively not prescriptively. Students should learn to speak real language that people actually use, not an artificial ideal form that nobody uses—we all use split infinitives from time to time when the circumstances make it necessary and it is often awkward to avoid them. Mostly, however, these prescriptive dos and don’ts about ‘between you and me’ or ‘it is I’ are not important enough or frequent enough to spend much time bothering about their implications for language teaching. If L2 learners need to pander to these shibboleths, a teacher can quickly provide a list of the handful of forms that pedants object to. At best the learner should be aware that some people take prescriptive grammar seriously and so it may be better to avoid such chestnuts as split infinitives in formal academic work as it may offend the people with strong prescriptive views about English but little knowledge.

One area where prescriptive grammar does still thrive is spelling and punctuation, where everyone believes there is a single ‘correct’ spelling for every word: spell <receive> as <recieve> or <news> as <new’s> at your peril. Another is word-processing; the program I use for writing this warns me against using final prepositions and passives, common as they are in everyday English. A third is journal editors, who have often been nasty about my sentences without verbs—to me a normal variation in prose found on many pages of any novel but anathema to a non-linguist editor, in my experience psychologists being the most pedantic—my use of sentences without verbs made one editor query whether I was a native speaker.

Traditional Grammar

A second popular meaning of ‘grammar’ concerns the parts of speech: the ‘fact’ that ‘a noun is a word that is the name of a person, place, thing, or idea’ is absorbed by every school pupil in England. This definition comes straight from *Tapestry Writing 1* (Pike-Baky, 2000), a coursebook published in the year 2000, but differs little from Joseph Priestley (1798) ‘A noun . . . is the name of any thing’, or indeed from William Cobbett (1819) ‘*Nouns are the names of persons and things*’. In England this eighteenth century form of grammar is still alive in schools: if you ask British undergraduates whether they have been taught grammar, they invariably deny it; if you ask them what a noun is, they nevertheless all know that it’s the name of a person or thing: someone has taught it to them.

Analysing sentences in this approach means labelling the parts with their names and giving rules that explain in words how they may be combined. This is often called *traditional grammar*. In essence it goes back to the grammars of Latin, receiving its English form in the grammars of the eighteenth century, many of which in fact set out to be prescriptive. Grammarians today do not reject this type of grammar outright so much as feel it is unscientific. After reading the definition of a noun, we still do not know what it is in the way that we know what a chemical element is: is ‘fire’ a noun? ‘opening’? ‘she’? The answer is that we do not know without seeing the word in a sentence, but the context is not mentioned in the definition. While the parts of speech are indeed relevant to grammar, there are many other powerful grammatical concepts that are equally important.

A useful modern source is, oddly enough, the online *NASA Manual* (McGaskill, 1990) which provides sensible practical advice in largely traditional terms, such as: ‘The subject and verb should be the most important elements of a sentence. Too many modifiers, particularly between the subject and verb, can over-power these elements.’

Some language teaching uses a type of grammar resembling a sophisticated form of traditional grammar. Grammar books for language teaching often present grammar through a series of visual displays and examples. An example is the stalwart *Essential Grammar in Use* (Murphy, 2012). A typical unit is headed ‘flower/flowers’ (singular and plural). It has a display of singular and plural forms (‘a flower > some flowers’), lists of idiosyncratic spellings of plurals (‘babies, shelves’), words that are unexpectedly plural (‘scissors’), and plurals not in ‘-s’ (‘mice’). It explains ‘The plural of a noun is usually -s’. In other words, it assumes that students know what the term ‘plural’ means, presumably because it will translate into all languages. But Japanese does not have plural forms for nouns; Japanese students have said to me that they only acquired the concept of singular and plural through learning English. Languages like Tongan or indeed Old English have *three* forms: singular, dual (‘two people’) and plural (‘more than two people’). The crucial question, for linguists at any rate, is how the subject of the sentence agrees with the verb in terms of singular or

plural, which is not mentioned in Murphy's text, although two out of the four exercises that follow depend upon it.

Even main coursebooks often rely on the students knowing the terms of traditional grammar. The EFL course for beginners (A1) *English Unlimited* (Doff, 2012) has an appendix 'grammar reference' that uses the technical terms in English 'subject pronouns', 'possessive adjectives', 'negative', 'object pronouns' and 'statement'. Goodness knows where the students are supposed to have picked up these technical terms in another language; modern language teachers in UK schools lament that pupils are no longer equipped with this framework of traditional grammatical terminology. Nor would explaining grammar in the students' first language necessarily be much help: in countries like Japan grammar does not come out of the Latin-based European tradition and uses quite different terms and concepts.

Structural Grammar

Language teaching has also made use of *structural grammar* based on the concept of phrase structure, which shows how some words go together in the sentence and some do not. In a sentence such as 'The man fed the dog', the word 'the' seems somehow to go with 'man', but 'fed' does not seem to go with 'the'. Suppose we group the words that seem to go together: 'the' clearly goes with 'man', so we can recognise a structure '(the man)'; 'the' goes with 'dog' to get another '(the dog)'. Then these structures can be combined with the remaining words: 'fed' belongs with '(the dog)' to get a new structure '(fed the dog)', not with 'the man' in 'the man fed'. Now the two structures '(the man)' and '(fed the dog)' go together to assemble the whole sentence. This phrase structure is usually presented in tree diagrams that show how words build up into phrases and phrases build up into sentences:

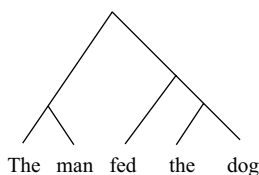


Figure 2.1 An example of a phrase structure tree.

Structural grammar thus describes how the elements of the sentence fit together in an overall structure built up from larger and larger structures. The important thing is not so much the meaning of the sentence as how it is constructed. Hence structural grammars define nouns and other parts of speech in terms of how they behave in structures—a noun is a word that inflects for plural 'beer', that can be modified by an adjective 'good beer' and that can be the subject of a sentence 'Good beer comes from the North'.

Teachers have been displaying structural grammar in substitution tables since at least the 1920s. These represent the same information as the phrase structure tree, but turned on its side, with some alternative vocabulary items specified. A typical example can be seen in the starter coursebook *speakout* (Eales and Oakes, 2012, p. 122):

Ordering			
Can I have	a	tea, mineral water cake,	please?
	two	coffees, colas, sandwiches	
How much is that?			

Figure 2.2 A typical grammar table (speakout, 2012).

These graphic displays of grammar are still common in present-day coursebooks and grammar books. The implication is that sentences are constructed by making choices from left to right (technically the finite-state Markov process grammar slammed by Chomsky in 1957), and indeed they were often used as a way of getting students to make up sentences in this fashion, as Chapter 11 illustrates.

Structure drills and pattern practice draw on similar ideas of structure, as in the following exercise from my own *Realistic English* (Abbs, Cook and Underwood, 1968):

You can go and see him.
Well, if I go . . .
He can come and ask you.
Well, if he comes . . .
They can write and tell her.
...

The students replace the verb each time within the structure ‘Well, if *Pronoun Verb*’, dinning in the present tense for possible conditions. Chapter 11 provides further discussion of such drills.

Grammar as Knowledge in the Mind

SLA research relies mainly on another meaning of ‘grammar’—the knowledge of language that the speaker possesses in the mind, known as *linguistic* or

grammatical competence, originally taken from Chomsky's work of the 1960s. A more recent definition is:

By 'grammatical competence' I mean the cognitive state that encompasses all those aspects of form and meaning and their relation, including underlying structures that enter into that relation, which are properly assigned to the specific subsystem of the human mind that relates representations of form and meaning.

(Chomsky, 1980, p. 59)

All speakers know the grammar of their language in this Lang₅ sense of 'language' as a mental state without having to study it. A speaker of English knows there is something wrong with 'Is John is the man who French?' without looking it up in any book—indeed few grammar books would be much help. A native speaker knows the system of the language. He or she may not be able to verbalise this knowledge clearly; it is 'implicit' knowledge below the level of consciousness.

Nevertheless, no-one could produce a single sentence of English without having the mental grammar of English present in their minds. A woman who spontaneously says 'The keeper fed the lion' shows that she knows the word order typical of English in which the subject 'The keeper' comes before the verb 'fed'. She knows the ways of making irregular past tenses in English—'fed' rather than the regular '-ed' ('feeded'); she knows that 'lion' needs an article 'the' or 'a'; and she knows that 'the' is used to talk about a lion that the listener already knows about. This is a very different from being able to talk about the sentence she has produced, only possible for people who have been taught explicit 'grammar'.

A parallel can be found in a teaching exercise that baffles students—devising instructions for everyday actions. Try asking the students 'Tell me how to put my coat on.' Everyone knows how to put a coat on in one sense but is unable to describe their actions. Or indeed try telling someone over the phone how to operate their DVD player. There is one type of knowledge in our minds which we can talk about consciously, another which is far from conscious. We can all put on our coats or produce a sentence in our first language; few of us can describe *how* we do it. This view of grammar as knowledge treats it as something stored unconsciously in the mind—the native speaker's competence. The rationale for all the paraphernalia of grammatical analysis such as sentence trees, structures and rules is ultimately that they describe the language knowledge in our minds.

As well as grammar, native speakers also possess knowledge of how language is used. This is often called *communicative competence* by those who see the public functions of language as crucial (Hymes, 1972) rather than the private ways we use language inside our minds. Sheer knowledge of language has little point if speakers cannot use it appropriately for all the activities in which they want to take part—complaining, arguing, persuading, declaring war, writing

love letters, buying season tickets, and so on. Many linguists see language as having private functions as well as public—language for dreaming or planning a day out. Hence the more general term *pragmatic competence* reflects all the possible uses of language rather than restricting them to communication (Chomsky, 1986): praying, mental arithmetic, keeping a diary, making a shopping list, and many others. In other words, while no-one denies that there is more to language than grammar, many linguists see it as the invisible central spine that holds everything else together.

Box 2.2 shows the typical grammatical elements in beginners' English coursebooks. This gives some idea of the types of structure that are taught to beginners in most of the classrooms around the world. The grammar is the typical medley of traditional and structural items. A clear presentation of this can be found in Harmer (2007). Many of these items are the basis for language teaching and for SLA research.

Box 2.2 English Grammar for Beginners

Here are the elements of English grammar common to lessons 1–5 of three beginners' books for adults, with examples.

- 1 **present of *to be*:** It's in Japan. I'm Mark. He's Jack Kennedy's nephew.
- 2 **articles *a/an*:** I'm a student. She is an old woman. It's an exciting place.
- 3 **subject pronouns:** She's Italian. I've got two brothers and a sister. Do you have black or white coffee?
- 4 ***in/from* with places:** You ask a woman in the street, the time. I'm from India. She lives in London.
- 5 **noun plurals:** boys parents sandwiches

Box 2.3 Types of Grammar

Grammar can be:

- 1 a way of telling people what they ought to say, rather than reporting what they do say (*prescriptive grammar*)
- 2 a system for describing sentence structure used in English schools for centuries based on grammars of classical languages such as Latin (*traditional grammar*)
- 3 a system for describing sentences based on the idea of smaller structures built up into larger structures (*structural grammar*)
- 4 the knowledge of the structural regularities of language in the minds of speakers (*linguistic/grammatical competence*)
- 5 EFL grammar combining elements of (2) and (3).

2.2. Structure Words, Morphemes and Sequences of Acquisition

Focusing Questions

- What do you understand by a structure (function) word?
- What do you think are the main characteristics of beginners' sentences in English or another second language?

Keywords

order of difficulty: the scale of difficulty for particular aspects of grammar for L2 learners.

sequence of acquisition: the order in which L2 learners acquire the grammar, pronunciation etc of the language.

An important distinction for language teaching has been between 'content' words and 'structure' words, also known as 'function' words. Here is a quotation from a Theodore Sturgeon story that combines made-up content words with real structure words:

So on Lirht, while the decisions on the fate of the miserable Hvov were being formulated, gwik still fardled, funted and fupped.

The same sentence with made-up structure words might have read:

So kel Mars, dom trelk decisions kel trelk fate mert trelk miserable slaves hiv polst formulated, deer still grazed, jumped kosp survived.

Only the first version is comprehensible in some way, even if we have no idea how you fardle and funt.

Content words have meanings that can be looked up in a dictionary and they are numbered in many thousands. 'Beer' and 'palimpsest' are content words referring to definable things. A new content word can be easily invented; advertisers try to do it all the time: 'Contains the magic new ingredient kryptonite'.

Structure words, on the other hand, are limited in number, consisting of words like 'the', 'to' and 'yet'. A computer program for teaching English needs about 220 structure words; the ten most common words in the British National Corpus 100 million sample are all structure words, as we see in Chapter 3. Structure words are described best in grammar books rather than dictionaries. The meaning of 'the' or 'of' depends on the grammatical rules of the language, not on dictionary definitions. It is virtually impossible to invent a new structure word because this would mean changing the grammatical rules of the language, which are fairly rigid, rather than adding an item to the stock of words of the language, which can easily take a few more. Science fiction novelists for example have a good time inventing new words for aliens, ranging from

'Alaree' to 'Vatch', new nouns for new scientific ideas, ranging from 'noocyte' (artificially created intelligent cells) to 'iahklu' (the Aldebaranian ability to influence the world through dreams); while Lewis Carroll once coined nouns like 'chortle', William Gibson now contributes 'cyberpunk' to the language. But no writer dares invent new structure words. The only exception perhaps is Marge Piercy's non-sexist pronoun 'per' for 'he/she' in the novel *Woman on the Edge of Time*, first coined by the psychologist Donald McKay, though this does not seem to have exactly caught on.

Box 2.4 shows the main differences between content and structure words. A short explanation can be found on Youtube (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R7mTjOif0Vo>). As can be seen, the distinction is quite powerful, affecting everything from the spelling to the pronunciation. This simplistic division needs to be made far more complicated to catch the complexities of a language like English, as we shall see.

Box 2.4 Content Words and Structure Words

<i>Content words</i>	<i>Structure words</i>
- are in the dictionary: 'book'	- are in the grammar: 'the'
- exist in large numbers: 615,000 in the Oxford English Dictionary	- are limited in number, say 220 in English
- vary in frequency: 'book' versus 'honved'	- are high frequency: 'to', 'the', 'I'
- are used more in written language	- are used more in spoken language
- are more likely to be preceded by a pause in speech	- are less likely to be preceded by a pause in speech
- consist of nouns 'glass', verbs 'move', adjectives 'glossy' etc	- consist of prepositions 'to', articles 'a', pronouns 'he' etc
- are always pronounced and spelled the same: 'look' /luk/	- vary in pronunciation for emphasis etc: 'have' /hæv ~ həv ~ əv ~ v/
- have a fixed stress or stresses; 'pilot'	- are stressed for emphasis etc; 'the' /ðɪ ~ ðə/
- have more than two letters: 'eye', 'Ann'	- can consist of one or two letters: 'I', 'an'
- are pronounced with an initial voiceless 'th': 'theory' /θ/	- are pronounced with an initial voiced 'th': 'there' /ð/
- new ones can always be invented: 'cyberpunk'	- new ones are almost never invented

As well as words, most linguists' grammars rely on a unit called the 'morpheme', defined as the smallest element of grammar that has meaning. Some words consist of a single morpheme—'to', 'book', 'like' or 'black'. Some words can have inflections added to show their grammatical role in the sentence, say 'books'

(book+s) or 'blacker' (black+er). Others can be split up into several morphemes: 'mini-supermarket' might be 'mini-super-market'; 'hamburger' is seen as 'ham-burger' (made of ham) rather than 'Hamburg-er' (person from Hamburg). When the phrase structure of a sentence is shown in tree diagrams, the whole sentence is the tree-top and the morphemes are the roots at the bottom: the morpheme is the point at which the structure can be split no more. The structure and behaviour of morphemes is dealt with in the area of grammar called morphology.

In some SLA research grammatical inflections like '-ing' are grouped together with structure words like 'to' as 'grammatical morphemes'. In the 1970s Heidi Dulay and Marina Burt (1973) decided to see how these grammatical morphemes were learnt by L2 learners. They made Spanish-speaking children learning English describe pictures and checked how often they supplied eight grammatical morphemes in the appropriate places in the sentence. Suppose that at a low level L2 learners say sentences with two content words like 'Girl go': how do they expand this rudimentary sentence into its full form?

- 1 *Plural '-s'*. The easiest morpheme for them was the plural '-s', getting 'Girls go'.
- 2 *Progressive '-ing'*. Next easiest was the word ending '-ing' in present continuous forms like 'going', 'Girls going'.
- 3 *Copula forms of 'be'*. Next came the use of 'be' as a copula, i.e. as a main verb in the sentence ('John is happy') rather than as an auxiliary used with another verb ('John is going'). Changing the sentence slightly gets 'Girls *are* here'.
- 4 *Auxiliary form of 'be'*. After this came the auxiliary forms of 'be' with '-ing', yielding 'Girls *are* going'.
- 5 *Definite and indefinite articles 'the' and 'a'*. Next in difficulty came the definite and indefinite articles 'the' and 'a', enabling the learners to produce 'The girls go' or 'A girl go'.
- 6 *Irregular past tense*. Next were the irregular English past tenses such as 'came' and 'went', i.e. those verbs that do *not* have an '-ed' ending pronounced in the usual three ways /t/, /d/ or /ɪd/, 'played', 'learnt' and 'waited', as in 'The girls *went*'.
- 7 *Third person '-s'*. Next came the third person '-s' used with present tense verbs, as in 'The girl *goes*'.
- 8 *Possessive 's'*. Most difficult of the eight endings was the 's' ending used with nouns to show possession, as in 'The girl's book'.

The sequence from 1 to 8 mirrors the order of difficulty for the L2 learners Dulay and Burt studied. They had least difficulty with plural '-s' and most difficulty with possessive 's'. One interesting discovery was the similarities between the L2 learners. It was not just Spanish-speaking children who have a sequence of difficulty for the eight grammatical morphemes. Similar orders have been found for Japanese children and for Korean adults (Makino, 1980; Lee, 1981), though not for one Japanese child (Hakuta, 1974). The first

language does not seem to make a crucial difference: all L2 learners have much the same order. This was quite surprising in that people had thought that the main problem in acquiring grammar was transfer from the first language; now it turned out that learners had the same types of mistake whatever the first language they spoke. The other surprise was that it did not seem to matter if the learners were children or adults; adults have roughly the same order as children (Krashen et al., 1976). It does not even make much difference whether or not they are attending a language class (Larsen-Freeman, 1976). There is a strong similarity between all L2 learners of English, whatever the explanation may be. This research with grammatical morphemes was the first to demonstrate the common factors of L2 learners so clearly.

While grammatical morphemes petered out as a topic of research in the 1990s, it was the precursor of much research to do with the acquisition of grammatical inflections such as past tense '-ed' which is still common today. Yet there are still things to learn from this area. Muhammad Hannan (2004) used it for instance to find a sequence of acquisition for Bengali-speaking children in East London. At the age of five, they knew only '-ing', as in 'looking'; by six they had added past tense /t/ 'looked'; by seven irregular past tenses such as 'went', and regular /d/ 'played'; by eight past participles '-en' 'been'; by nine the only persistent problem was with 'zero' past 'hit'. Clearly these children made a consistent progression for grammatical morphemes over time.

This type of research brought important confirmation of the idea of the learner's independent language, interlanguage. Learners from many backgrounds seemed to be creating the same kind of grammar for English out of what they heard and were passing through more or less the same stages of acquisition. They were reacting in the same way to the shared experience of learning English. While the first language made some difference, its influence was dwarfed by what the learners had in common. Indeed at one point Dulay and Burt (1973) dramatically claimed that only 3% of learners' errors could be attributed to interference from the first language. While later research has seldom found such a low incidence, nevertheless it became clear that much of the learning of a second language was common to all L2 learners rather than being simply a matter of transfer from their first language.

One of the best demonstrations of the independence of interlanguage came from a research programme that investigated the acquisition of five second languages by adult migrant workers in Europe, known as the ESF (European Science Foundation) project (Klein and Perdue, 1997). Researchers found a basic grammar that all L2 learners shared, which had three simple rules: a sentence may consist of:

- a Noun Phrase followed by a Verb, optionally followed by another Noun Phrase 'girl take bread'
- a Noun Phrase followed by a copula and another NP or an adjective 'it's bread'
- a Verb followed by a Noun Phrase 'pinching its'.

L2 learners not only have an interlanguage grammar, they have the *same* interlanguage grammar, regardless of the language they are learning and the first language they speak. In other words, all that teachers can actually expect from learners after a year or so is a sparse grammar having these three rules; whatever the teacher may try to do, this is what the learners can achieve.

Box 2.5 Early Acquisition of L2 Grammar

- Content and structure words differ in many ways including the ways they are used in sentences and how they are pronounced.
- Grammatical morphemes (structure words and grammatical inflections) are learnt in a particular sequence in L2 acquisition.
- L2 learners acquire the same basic grammar virtually regardless of the first and second languages involved.

2.3. The Processability Model

Focusing Questions

- Do you find problems in following certain structures in your L2, or indeed your L1?
- Why do you think you find some structures more difficult to follow than others?

Keywords

sequence of development: the inevitable progression of learners through definite stages of acquisition for particular structures such as negation.

processability: sequences of acquisition may reflect the ease with which certain structures can be processed by the mind; the complexity of L2 grammatical structures the mind can handle depends on the amount of memory available.

the teachability hypothesis: ‘an L2 structure can be learnt from instruction only if the learner’s interlanguage is close to the point when this structure is acquired in the natural setting’ (Pienemann, 1984, p. 201).

The problem with research into sequences of acquisition was that it tended to say *what* the learners did rather than *why* they did it. An attempt was made to create a broader-based sequence of development, first called the *Multidimensional Model*, later the *Processability Model*, which believed that the explanation for sequences must lie in the expanding capacity of the learner’s mind to handle the grammar of L2 sentences. The core idea was that some sentences are formed by moving elements from one position to another. English questions,

for example, move the auxiliary or the question-word to the beginning of the sentence, a familiar idea to language teachers. So 'John is nice' becomes 'Is John nice?' by moving 'is' to the beginning; 'John is where?' becomes 'Where is John?' by moving first 'where' then 'is'; and 'John will go where?' becomes 'Where will John go?' by moving both 'where' and 'will' in front of 'John'.

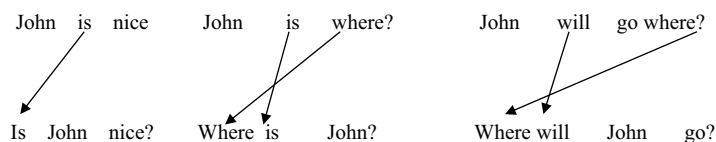


Figure 2.3 Examples of movement in syntax.

The Multidimensional Model sees syntactic movement as the key element in understanding the learning sequence and movement clearly makes demands on the student's memory processes. The learner starts with sentences without movement and learns how to move the various parts of the sentence around to get the final form. The learner climbs a structural tree like that seen on Figure 2.3 from bottom to top, first learning to deal with words, next with phrases, then with simple sentences, finally with subordinate clauses in complex sentences.

Stage 1

To start with, the learners can produce only one word at a time, say 'ticket' or 'beer', or formulas such as 'What's the time?' At this stage the learners know content words but have no idea of grammatical structure; the words come out in a stream without being put in phrases and without grammatical morphemes, as if the learners had a dictionary in their mind but no grammar.

Stage 2

Next learners acquire the typical word order of the language. In both English and German this is the subject verb object (SVO) order—'John likes beer', 'Hans liebt Bier'. This is the only word order that the learners know; they do not have any alternative word orders based on movement such as questions. So they put negatives in the front of the sentence as in 'No me live here' and make questions with rising intonation such as 'You like me?', both of which maintain the basic word order of English without needing movement.

In the next stages the learners discover how to move elements about, in particular to the beginnings and ends of the sentence.

Stage 3

Now the learners start to move elements to the beginning of the sentence. So they put adverbials at the beginning—'On Tuesday I went to London'; they use *wh*-words at the beginning with no inversion—'Who lives in Camden?';

and they move auxiliaries to get Yes/No questions—‘Will you be there?’ Typical sentences at this stage are ‘Yesterday I sick’ and ‘Beer I like’, in both of which the initial element has been moved from later in the sentence.

Stage 4

At the next stage, learners discover how the preposition can be separated from its phrase in English, ‘the patient he looked after’ rather than ‘the patient after which he looked’, a phenomenon technically known as preposition-stranding—the antithesis of the prescriptive grammar rule. They also start to use the ‘-ing’ ending—‘I’m reading a good book’.

Stage 5

Next come question-word questions such as ‘Where is he going to be?’, the third person grammatical morpheme ‘-s’, ‘He likes’, and the dative with ‘to’, ‘He gave his name to the receptionist’. At this stage the learners are starting to work *within* the structure of the sentence, not just using the beginning or the end as locations to move elements to. Another new feature is the third person ‘-s’ ending of verbs, ‘He smokes’.

Stage 6

The final stage is acquiring the order of subordinate clauses. In English this sometimes differs from the order in the main clause. The question order is ‘Will he go?’ but the reported question is ‘Jane asked if he *would go*’ not ‘Jane asked if *would he go*’, to the despair of generations of EFL students. At this stage the learner is sorting out the more untypical orders in subordinate clauses after the ordinary main clause order has been learnt. In addition this stage includes structures such as ‘He gave me the book’ where the indirect object precedes the direct object, as opposed to ‘He gave the book to me’ with the reverse order. Though, as a speaker of Southern British English I can say both ‘Give it me’ and ‘Give me it’.

The Multidimensional Model stresses that L2 learners have a series of interim grammars of English—interlanguages. Their first grammar is just isolated words; the second uses words in an SVO order; the third uses word order with some elements moved to the beginning or end; and so on. As with grammatical morphemes, this sequence seems inexorable: all learners go through these overall stages in the same order. The recent development of the Multidimensional Model has been called the *Processability Model* because it explains these sequences in terms of the grammatical processes involved in the production of a sentence, which are roughly as follows:

- i the learner gets access to individual content words ‘see. car.’
- ii the learner gets access to grammatical structure words ‘see. the car.’ (called the ‘category procedure’)

- iii the learner assembles these into phrases 'he see. the car.' (the 'phrasal procedure')
- iv the learner puts the phrases together within the sentence 'he will see the car' (the 'S-procedure')
- v the learner can work with both main clauses and subordinate clauses; 'If he looks out of the window, he will see the car' (the 'subordinate clause procedure')

In a sense, the teacher is helpless to do much about sequences like the grammatical morphemes order. If all students have to acquire language in more or less the same sequence, the teacher can only fit in with it. This *Processability Model* leads to the *teachability hypothesis*: 'an L2 structure can be learnt from instruction only if the learner's interlanguage is close to the point when this structure is acquired in the natural setting' (Pienemann, 1984, p. 201).

So teachers should teach according to the stage that their students are at. To take some examples from the above sequence:

- Do not teach the third person '-s' ending of present tense verbs in 'He likes' at early stages as it inevitably comes late.
- In the early stages concentrate on the main word order of subject verb object (SVO), 'Cats like milk', and do not expect learners to learn the word order of questions, 'What do cats like?', etc., until much later.
- Introduce sentence-initial adverbials, 'In summer I play tennis', as a way into the movement involved in questions, 'Do you like Brahms?'

These are three possible suggestions out of the many that arise from the research. They conflict with the sequence in which the grammatical points are usually introduced in textbooks; 's' endings and questions often come in opening lessons; initial adverbial phrases are unlikely to be taught before questions. It may be that there are good teaching reasons why these suggestions should not be taken on board. For instance, when people tried postponing using questions (which involve movement) for the first year of teaching to avoid movement, this created enormous practical problems in the classroom, where questions are the life-blood. But these ideas are nevertheless worth considering in the sequencing of materials, whatever other factors may overrule them.

Let us compare the sequence of elements in a typical EFL coursebook with that in the processability model. A typical modern course is *Flying Colours* (Garton-Sprenger and Greenall, 1990), intended for adult beginners. Unit 1 of *Flying Colours* starts with the student looking for 'international words' such as 'bar' and 'jeans' and repeating short formulas such as 'What's your name?' and 'I don't understand'. Thus it starts with words rather than structures, as does the processability model. Unit 2, however, plunges into questions: 'What is your phone number?', 'Would you like some French onion soup?', 'What does Kenneth Hill do?' In terms of the processability model these come in stages 3 and 5 and should not be attempted until the students have the main Subject Verb

Object structure of English fixed in their minds. Certainly this early introduction of questions is a major difference from the processability model. Unit 3 introduces the present continuous tense—‘She’s wearing a jacket and jeans’. While this is already late compared to courses that introduce the present continuous in lesson 1, it is far in advance of its position in the processability model sequence at stage 4. Indeed my own beginners book *People and Places* (1980) tried to avoid the present continuous at this stage but did not entirely succeed. Subordinate clauses are not mentioned in *Flying Colours* (1990), apart from comparative clauses in Unit 6. Looking through the text, however, one finds in Unit 1 that the students have to understand sentences such as ‘When he goes to a foreign country, he learns . . .’ (‘when’ clause), ‘Listen and say who is speaking’ (reported speech clause), and ‘Boris Becker wins after a hurricane stops the match’ (‘after’ clause), ‘The only other things I buy are a map and some post-cards’ (relative clause). Clearly subordinate clauses are not seen as particularly difficult; the processability model, however, insists they are mastered last of all.

Some other differences between the L2 stages and the sequences in EFL coursebooks are then:

- The textbook collapses two L2 stages into one. In the ‘starter’ course *Speakout* (2012) for instance Unit 1 includes wh-questions like ‘Where are you from?’ and be-questions like ‘Are you from Saudi Arabia?’, both dependent on grammatical movement from declarative sentences and occurring at Stages 3 and 5 of the Processability Model respectively.
- The textbook goes against some aspects of the order. For example, *Tapes-try 1 Writing* (Pike-Baky, 2000) for ‘high beginning’ students uses subordinate clauses from the very beginning despite their apparent lateness in acquisition. Chapter 2 has instructions ‘Think about where you go every day’, text sentences ‘So he designed an environment where people “can take their minds off” their problems’, and completion sentences ‘I believe that Feng Shui . . .’, all of which would be impossible for students below the most advanced stage of the Processability Model.
- The coursebook omits some stages, for instance, not teaching initial adverbs and preposition-stranding, unmentioned in the grammatical syllabuses for, say *Speakout* (Eales and Oakes, 2012), *New Headway Beginners* (Soares and Soares, 2002), or *English Unlimited* (Doff, 2010), even if they doubtless creep in somewhere.
- When coursebooks make use of grammatical sequences at all, they tend to rely on a skeleton of tenses and verb forms, by no means central to the processability model or indeed to any of the approaches found in SLA research. For instance *International Express* (1996) for pre-intermediates follows the sequence present simple (Unit 1), present continuous (2), past simple (3), present perfect (6), future ‘will’ (9), passives (12), a typical EFL teaching sequence for most of the twentieth century but virtually unconnected to any of the L2 learning sequences. The Japanese course *Oneworld* (2012) has the very similar sequence (1) present tense *be*, (2) present simple, (3) present continuous, (4) past simple.

One problem is very hard for language teaching to resolve. Learners' interlanguages contain rules that are different from the native speaker's competence. The student may temporarily produce sentences that deviate from native correctness, say stage 2 'No me live here'. Many teaching techniques, however, assume that the point of an exercise is to get the student to produce sentences from the very first lesson that are completely correct in terms of the target language, even if they are severely restricted in terms of grammar and vocabulary. The students are *not* supposed to be producing sentences like 'No me live here' in the classroom. Teaching materials similarly only present sentences that are possible in terms of the target language, never letting learners hear sentences such as 'No me live here'. Hence the classroom and the textbook can never fully reflect the stages that interlanguages go through, which may well be quite ungrammatical in terms of the target language for a long time—just as children only get round to fully grammatical sentences in their first language after many years. There is an implicit tension between the pressure on students to produce well-formed sentences and the natural stages that students go through. Should learners be allowed to produce these 'mistakes' in the classroom, since they are inevitable? Or should the teacher try to prevent them? The answers to these questions also affect when and how the teacher will correct the student's 'mistakes'.

Box 2.6 Processability

- Learners acquire a second language in a sequence of six grammatical stages.
- These stages relate to the learners' growing ability to process language in their minds.
- Sequences of teaching currently do not fit these six stages and may place undue demands on learners.

2.4. Principles and Parameters Grammar

Focusing Questions

- Do you think that you learnt your first language entirely from your parents or do you think some of it was already present in your mind?
- If you came from Mars, what would you say all human languages had in common?

Keyword

Universal Grammar: the language faculty built into the human mind consisting of principles and parameters.

So far this chapter has discussed grammar in terms of morphemes, content and structure words, and movement. All of these capture some aspect of L2 learning and contribute to our knowledge of the whole. A radically different way of looking at grammar that has become popular in recent years, however, tries to see what human languages have in common. This is the Universal Grammar theory associated with Noam Chomsky. The version of the Universal Grammar (UG) that emerged in the 1980s sees the knowledge of grammar in the mind as made up of two components: 'principles' that all languages have in common and 'parameters' on which they vary. All human minds are believed to honour the common principles that are forced on them by the nature of the human minds that all their speakers share. They differ over the settings for the parameters for particular languages. The overall implications of the UG model are given in Chapter 10.

Principles of Language

One principle that has been proposed is called locality. How do you explain to a student how to make English questions such as 'Is Sam the cat that is black?' One possible instruction is to describe the movement involved: 'Start from the sentence: "Sam is the cat that is black" and move the *second* word "is" to the beginning.'

This works satisfactorily for this one example. But if the students used this rule, they would go completely wrong with sentences such as 'The old man is the one who's late', producing 'Old the man is the one who's late?' Something must be missing from the explanation.

To patch it up, you might suggest: 'Move the *copula* "is" to the beginning of the sentence.' So the student can now produce 'Is the old man the one who's late?' But suppose the student wanted to make a question out of 'Sam is the cat that is black?' As well as producing the sentence 'Is Sam the cat that is black?', the rule also allows 'Is Sam is the cat that black?' It is obvious to us all that no-one would ever dream of producing this question; but *why* not? It is just as possible logically to move one 'is' as the other.

The explanation again needs modifying to say: 'Move the copula "is" *in the main clause* to the beginning of the sentence.' This instruction depends on the listeners knowing enough of the structure of the sentence to be able to distinguish the main clause from the relative clause. In other words it presupposes that they know the structure of the sentence; anybody producing a question in English takes the structure of the sentence into account. Inversion questions in English, and indeed in all other languages, involve a knowledge of structure, not just of the order of the words. They also involve the locality principle which says that such movement has to be 'local', i.e. within the same area of structure rather than across areas of structure that span the whole sentence. There is no particular reason why this should be so; computer languages, for instance, do not behave like this, nor do mathematical equations. It is just an odd feature of human languages that they depend on structure. In short the

locality principle is built into the human mind. The reason why we find it so 'obvious' that 'Is Sam is the cat that black?' is ungrammatical is because our minds work in a particular way; we literally can't conceive of a sentence that works differently.

This approach to grammar affects the nature of interlanguage—the knowledge of the second language in the learner's mind. From what we have seen so far, there might seem few limits on how the learners' interlanguage grammars develop. Their source might be partly the learners' first languages, partly their learning strategies, partly other factors. However, if the human mind always uses its built-in language principles, interlanguages too must conform to them. It would be impossible for the L2 learner, say, to produce questions that did not depend on structure. And indeed no-one has yet found sentences said by L2 learners that break the known language principles. I tested 140 university level students of English with six different first languages on a range of structures including locality; 132 of them knew that sentences such as:

Is Sam is the cat that black?

were wrong, while only 76 students knew that:

Sam is the cat that is black.

And:

Is Sam the cat that is black?

were right. Second language learners clearly have few problems with this deviant structure compared to other structures. Interlanguages do not vary without limit but conform to the overall mould of human language, since they are stored in the same human minds. Like any scientific theory, this may be proved wrong. Tomorrow someone may find a learner who has no idea that questions depend on structure. But so far no-one has found clear-cut examples of learners breaking these universal principles.

Parameters of Variation

How do parameters capture the many grammatical differences between languages? One variation is whether the grammatical subject of a declarative sentence has to be actually present in the sentence. In German it is possible to say 'Er spricht' (he speaks) but impossible to say 'Spricht' (speaks); declarative sentences must have subjects. The same is true for French, for English, and for a great many languages. But in Italian, while it is possible to say 'Il parla' (he talks), it is far more usual to say 'Parla' (talks) without an expressed subject; declarative sentences are not required to have subjects. The same is true in Arabic and Chinese and many other languages. This variation is captured by

the *pro-drop* parameter (also known as the null subject parameter)—so-called for technical reasons we will not go into here. In ‘pro-drop’ languages such as Italian, Chinese or Arabic, the subject does not need to be actually present; in ‘non-pro-drop’ languages such as English or German, it must always be present in declarative sentences. The pro-drop parameter variation has effects on the grammars of all languages; each of them is either pro-drop or non-pro-drop.

Children learning their first language at first start with sentences without subjects (Hyams, 1986). Then those who are learning a non-pro-drop language such as English go on to learn that subjects are compulsory. The obvious question for L2 learning is whether it makes a difference if the first language does not have subjects and the second language does, and vice versa. Lydia White (1986) compared how English was learnt by speakers of French (a non-pro-drop language with compulsory subjects) and by speakers of Spanish (a pro-drop language with optional subjects). If the L1 setting for the pro-drop parameter has an effect, the Spanish-speaking learners should make different mistakes from the French-speaking learners. Spanish-speaking learners were indeed much more tolerant of sentences like ‘In winter snows a lot in Canada’ than were the French speakers. Oddly enough this effect does not necessarily go in the reverse direction: English learners of Spanish do not have as much difficulty with leaving the subject out as Spanish learners of English have in putting it in.

One attraction of this form of grammar is its close link to language acquisition, as we see in Chapter 10. The parts of language that have to be learnt are the settings for the parameters on which languages vary. The parts which do *not* have to be learnt are the principles that all languages have in common. Learning the grammar of a second language is not so much learning completely new structures, rules, and so on as discovering how to set the parameters for the new language—whether you have to use a subject, what the word order is within the phrase, and so on—and acquiring new vocabulary.

Another attraction is that it provides a framework within which all languages can be compared. It used to be difficult to compare grammars of different languages, say English and Japanese, because they were regarded as totally different. Now the grammars of all languages are seen as variations within a single overall scheme. Japanese can be compared to English in its use of locality (unnecessary in Japanese questions because Japanese does not form questions by moving elements of the sentence around); in terms of the pro-drop parameter (English sentences must have subjects, Japanese do not have to); and in terms of word order parameters (Japanese has the order phrase+head of phrase, for example, noun phrase followed by postposition ‘Nihon ni’ (Japan in), English phrases have the order head+noun phrase, for example, preposition followed by noun phrase ‘in London’). This helps with the description of learners’ speech, which fits within the same framework regardless of their first language and reveals things they have in common. Chinese, Arabic or Spanish students all have problems with the subject in English because of their different setting for the pro-drop parameter.

The implications of this overall model for language learning and language teaching are described in greater detail in Chapter 10. For the moment we need to point out that the study of grammar and of acquisition by linguists and SLA researchers in recent years has been much more concerned with the development of abstract ways of looking at phenomena like pro-drop than with the conventional grammar of earlier sections. Language teaching will eventually miss out if it does not keep up with such new ideas of grammar (Cook, 1989).

Box 2.7 L2 Learning of Principles and Parameters Grammar

- L2 learners do not need to learn principles of Universal Grammar as they will use them automatically.
- L2 learners need to acquire new parameter settings for parameters such as pro-drop, often starting from their first language.
- All L2 learners can be looked at within the same overall framework of grammar as it applies to all languages.

2.5. L2 Learning of Grammar and L2 Teaching

Focusing Questions

- What do you think is easy grammar for a beginner?
- What do you think is the best order for teaching grammar?

Teachers are often surprised by what ‘grammar’ means in SLA research and how much importance is given to it. While the grammar used here has some resemblance to the traditional and structural grammars with which teachers are familiar—‘structures’, ‘rules’, and so on—the perspective has changed. The SLA research category of grammatical morphemes for instance cuts across the teaching categories of prepositions, articles, and forms of ‘be’. Principles and parameters theory puts grammar on a different plane from anything in language teaching. Hence teachers will not find any quick help with carrying out conventional grammar teaching in such forms of grammar. But they will nevertheless understand better what the students are learning and the processes they are going through. For example, sentences without subjects are not only common in students’ work but also can be simply explained by the pro-drop parameter. It is an insightful way of looking at language which teachers have not hitherto been conscious of.

Let us gather together some of the threads about grammar and teaching introduced so far in this chapter. If the syllabus that the student is learning includes grammar in some shape or form, this should be not just a matter of structures and rules but of a range of highly complex phenomena, a handful

of which have been discussed in this chapter. The L2 learning of grammar has turned out to be wider and deeper than anyone supposed. It ranges from morphemes such as 'the' to processes of sentence production to parameters about the presence of subject pronouns. Above all, grammar is knowledge in the mind, not rules in a book; the crucial end-product of much teaching is that students should 'know' language in an unconscious sense so that they can put it to good use. Teaching has to pay attention to the internal processes and knowledge the students are subconsciously building up in their minds (Lang, in the sense of language given in Chapter 1).

Box 2.8 Verb Form Sequence in *speakout* (Eales and Oakes, 2012)

- 1 'be' present tense forms
- 2 present simple
- 3 past simple regular
- 4 past simple irregular
- 5 'I like' + 'ing' forms
- 6 'can/can't'
- 7 'be going to'

Grammar is also relevant to the sequence in which elements of language are taught. Of necessity, language teaching has to present the various aspects of language in order rather than introduce them all simultaneously. The conventional solution used to be to sequence the grammar in terms of increasing complexity of verb forms, say, teaching the present simple first 'He cooks' and the past perfect continuous passive last 'It has been being cooked', because the former is much 'simpler' than the latter. Box 2.8 gives the teaching sequence for grammatical items in *speakout* (Eales and Oakes, 2012), a beginners (A1) course. This is typical of the sequences that have been developed for EFL teaching over the past hundred years, based chiefly on the tense system. While it has then been shown to be successful in practice, it has no particular justification from SLA research.

As Robert DeKeyser (2005) points out, it is almost impossible for researchers to agree on which forms are more complex, which comparatively simple. When language use and classroom tasks became more important to teaching, the choice of a teaching sequence was no longer straightforward since some way of sequencing these non-grammatical items needed to be found. SLA research has often claimed that there are definite orders for learning language, particularly for grammar, as we have seen. What should teachers do about this? Four extreme points of view can be found:

- 1 *Ignore the parts of grammar that have a particular L2 learning sequence*, as the learner will follow these automatically in any case. Nothing teachers can

do will help or hinder the student who is progressing through the grammatical morpheme order from plural '-s' to irregular past tense to possessive 's'. Teachers should therefore get on with teaching the thousand and one *other* things that the student needs and should let nature follow its course.

- 2 *Follow the L2 learning order as closely as possible* in the teaching. There is no point in teaching 'not' with 'any' to beginners 'I haven't got any money' because the students are not ready for it. So the order of teaching should follow the order found in L2 learning as much as possible. Language used in the class might then be geared to the learners' stage, not of course by matching it exactly since this would freeze the learner at that moment in time, but by being slightly ahead of the learner, called by Krashen (1985) 'i+1' (one step on from the learner's current grammar).
- 3 *Teach the last things in an L2 learning sequence first*. The students can best be helped by being given the extreme point of the sequence and by filling in the intermediary positions for themselves. It has been claimed for example that teaching the most difficult types of relative clauses is more effective than teaching the easy forms, because the students fill in the gaps for themselves spontaneously rather than needing them filled by teaching.
- 4 *Ignore grammar altogether*. Some might argue that, if the students' goals are to communicate in a second language, grammar is an optional extra. Obviously this depends upon the definition of grammar: in the Lang₅ sense that any speaker of a language knows the grammatical system of the language then grammar is not dispensable in this way but plays a part in every sentence anybody produces or comprehends for whatever communicative reason.

As with pronunciation, an additional problem is which grammar to use. Typically the description seems to be slanted towards the grammar of written language with its complete 'textual' sentences rather than spoken language with its elliptical 'lexical' sentences (Cook, 2004b). For example English teachers have spent considerable energy on teaching students to distinguish singular 'there is' from plural 'there are' as in *speakout* (Eales and Oakes, 2012), yet the distinction barely exists in spoken English, which uses /ðəz/ for both. The publisher of my first EFL coursebook objected to the sentence 'Good book that' occurring in a dialogue, an unremarkable spoken form; of course the publisher won.

Traditionally for English the model has been taken to be a literate educated native speaker from an English-speaking country. This, however, ignores the differences between varieties of English spoken in different countries. An Irishman means something quite different from an Englishman by 'she's after doing it', and an Indian by 'I am thinking it'; North Americans have past tenses like 'dove' and past participles like 'gotten'

that do not exist in current British speech. Nor does the model encompass variation between people in one country, say the people of Norwich, who don't use the singular 's' on verbs 'he ride', or the Geordie who distinguishes singular 'you' from plural 'yous'. And it treats English as having only a singular genre; you must always have a subject in the sentence, even if it is perfectly normal to leave it out in diaries and e-mails: 'Went out' or 'Like it'. Similar issues arise in choosing a grammatical model for languages that are used across a variety of countries: should French be based on Paris and ignore the rest of France, along with the Frenches spoken in Switzerland, Quebec and Central Africa? See Chapters 8 and 9 for further discussion.

Box 2.9 Alternative Ways of Using L2 Sequences in Language Teaching

- Ignore the parts of grammar that have a particular L2 learning sequence, as the learner will follow these automatically anyway.
- Follow the L2 learning order as closely as possible in the teaching.
- Teach the last things in an L2 learning sequence first.
- Ignore grammar altogether.

No-one would probably hold completely to these simplified views. The fuller implications of the L2 order of learning or difficulty depends on the rest of teaching. Teaching must balance grammar against language functions, vocabulary, classroom interaction, and much else that goes on in the classroom to find the appropriate teaching for *those* students in *that* situation. Teachers do not necessarily have to choose from among these alternatives once and for all. A different decision may have to be made for each area of grammar or language and each stage of acquisition. But SLA research is starting to provide information about sequences based on the processes going on in the learners' minds, which will eventually prove a goldmine for teaching.

2.6. The Role of Explicit Grammar in Language Teaching

Focusing Questions

- Did hearing about grammar from your teacher help you learn a second language? In what way?
- How aware are you of grammar when you are speaking (a) your first language (b) your second language?

Keywords

consciousness-raising: helping the learners by drawing attention to features of the second language.

language awareness: helping the learners by raising awareness of language itself.

sensitization: helping the learners by alerting them to features of the first language.

focus on FormS: deliberate discussion of grammar without reference to meaning.

focus on form (FonF): discussion of grammar and vocabulary arising from meaningful language in the classroom.

It is one thing to make teachers aware of grammar and to base coursebooks, syllabuses and teaching exercises on grammar: grammar is a crucial aspect of language teaching behind the scene. It is something else to say that the students themselves should be aware of grammar or should be explicitly taught grammar. Chapter 1 showed that the nineteenth and twentieth century tradition of teaching has avoided explicit grammar in the classroom from the days of the Direct Method to those of the Communicative Method. This section looks at some of the ideas that have been raised about using grammatical terms and descriptions with students. Though the discussion happens to concentrate on grammar, the same issues arise about the use of phonetic symbols in pronunciation teaching, the class discussion of meanings of words or the explanations of language functions, all of which depend on the students consciously understanding the rules and features of language rather than using them unconsciously.

One issue is the extent to which grammatical form and meaning should be separated. Mike Long (1991) makes a distinction between *focus on FormS*, which is deliberate discussion of grammatical forms such as ‘s’, or the past tense ‘ed’, and *focus on form (FonF)*, which relates the form to the meaning arising from language in the classroom. A linguist might object that grammar is a system for encoding and decoding particular meanings; grammar is a ‘meaning-making resource’ (Halliday and Mattheisen, 2013, p. 4). Any teaching of grammar that didn’t involve meaning isn’t teaching grammar at all. However the distinction between FormS and FonF does focus attention away from grammar explanation for its sake towards thinking how grammar may contribute within the whole context of language teaching methodology, as described in Chapter 11.

Explicit Grammar Teaching

This revives the classical debate in language teaching about whether grammar should be explained to the students, mentioned in Chapter 1. Usually the kind of grammar involved is the traditional or structural grammar described earlier, exemplified in books such as *Essential Grammar in Use* (Murphy, 2012); seldom does it mean grammar in the sense of knowledge of principles and

parameters such as locality and pro-drop. Hence it has often been argued that the problem with teaching grammar overtly is not the method itself but the type of grammar that has been used. Most linguists would regard these grammars as the equivalent to using alchemy as a basis for teaching chemistry.

Other types of grammar are hardly ever used in teaching. The pro-drop parameter for example is a simple idea to explain and might well be a useful rule for students of English from Japan or Greece or indeed for learners of the vast majority of the world's languages; yet it is never mentioned in materials that teach grammar. If the grammar content were better, perhaps explicit grammar teaching would be more effective.

The use of explicit explanation implies that L2 learning is different from L1 learning, where it never occurs. The belief that L2 learning can potentially make use of explanation underlies distinctions such as those made by Harold Palmer (1926) between 'spontaneous capacities' for acquiring speech and 'the studious capacity' through which people study language, and by Krashen (1981a) between 'acquisition' and 'learning' (the latter being conscious and available only to older learners), and by many others.

The main issue is the connection between conscious understanding of a rule and the ability to use it. Any linguist can tell you facts about languages such as Japanese or Gboudi that their native speakers could not describe. This does not mean the linguists can say a single word, let alone a sentence, of Japanese or Gboudi in a comprehensible way. They have acquired a pure 'academic' knowledge of the languages. In their case this satisfies their needs. Grammatical explanation is a way of teaching facts about the language—that is to say a form of linguistics. If the aim of teaching is academic knowledge of language, conscious understanding is acceptable as a form of L2 learning. But students who want to use the language need to transform this academic knowledge into the ability to use it, going beyond the *Lang₃* mental sense to the *Lang₄* social sense of 'language'.

Grammatical explanation in the classroom has then relied on the assumption that rules that are learnt consciously can be converted into unconscious processes of comprehension and production. Some people have questioned whether academic knowledge ever converts into the ability to use the language in this way. The French subjunctive was explained to me at school, not just to give me academic knowledge of the facts of French, but to help me to write French. After a period of absorption, this conscious rule was supposed to become part of my unconscious ability to use the language: the actual effect, unfortunately, was not so much to help me to use it easily as to make me freeze whenever I saw a subjunctive verb looming over the horizon.

Stephen Krashen (1985), however, has persistently denied that consciously learnt rules change into normal speech processes in the same way as grammar that is acquired unconsciously. This is sometimes called the 'non-interface position', i.e. that learnt grammar does not convert into the acquired grammar that speech depends upon. If Krashen's view is accepted, people who are taught by grammatical explanation can only produce language by laboriously checking each sentence against their conscious repertoire of rules, as many had to do with Latin at school—a process that Krashen calls 'Monitoring'.

Or they can use it for certain 'tips' or rules of thumb such as 'i before e except after c or before g'. Conscious knowledge of language rules in this view is no more than an optional extra. This mirrors the traditional teaching assumption, summed up in the audiolingual slogan 'teach the language not about the language', more elegantly phrased by Wilga Rivers (1964) as 'analogy provides a better foundation for foreign language learning than analysis', as discussed in Chapter 11; Krashen's ideas are discussed further in Chapter 10.

Convincing as these claims may be, one should remember that many graduates of European universities who learnt English by studying traditional grammars turned into fluent and spontaneous speakers of English. I asked university level students of English which explicit grammar rules they had found useful; almost all said that they still sometimes visualised verb paradigms for English to check what they were writing. This at least suggests that the conversion of conscious rules to non-conscious processes does take place for some academic students: every teaching method works for someone somewhere.

Language Awareness

An alternative possibility is that raising awareness of language in general helps second language learning. Eric Hawkins (1984) suggested that the learners' general awareness of language should be raised before they start learning the L2, partly through grammar. If the students know the kind of thing to expect in the new language, they are more receptive to it. Eric Hawkins advocates 'an exploratory approach' in which the pupils investigate grammar by for example deciding where to insert 'see-through' in the sentence 'She put on her cosy, old, blue, nylon, blouse'. They invent their own labels for grammar, rather than being taught a pre-established system. As Hawkins puts it, 'grammar approached as a voyage of discovery into the patterns of the language rather than the learning of prescriptive rules, is no longer a bogey word'. It is not the teaching of particular points of grammar that matters but the overall increase in the pupil's language sensitivity. The textbook *Learning to Learn English* (Ellis and Sinclair, 1989) provides some exercises to make EFL learners more aware of their own predilections, for instance suggesting ways for the students to discover grammatical rules themselves. Philip Riley (1985) suggested *sensitization* of the students by using features of the first language to help them understand the second, say by discussing puns to help them see how speech is split up into words. Increasing awareness of language may have many educational advantages and indeed help L2 learning in a broad sense. Raised awareness of language is in itself a goal of some language teaching. It has, however, no particular seal of approval from the types of grammar considered in this chapter.

Focus on Form (FonF)

An issue in recent research is how focus on form contributes to the student's learning. As Mike Long (1991, pp. 45–46) puts it, 'focus on form . . . overtly

draws students' attention to linguistic elements as they arise incidentally in lessons whose overriding focus is on meaning or communication'. Several ways exist of drawing the students' attention to grammar without actually explaining grammar explicitly. Grammatical items or structures may be brought to the students' attention by some graphic or auditory device, provided it does not distort the patterns of the language—stressing all the grammatical morphemes in speech to draw attention to them, say, would be a travesty—'IN THE town WHERE I WAS born lived A man WHO sailed TO sea'.

SLA research by Joanna White (1998) drew the students' attention to grammatical forms such as pronouns by printing them in italic or bold face, for instance 'She was happy when *she* saw **her** ball'. However she found variation between individuals rather than a consistent pattern. The minor problem is that italic and bold letter-forms are used for emphasis in English and, however much the students' pronouns improved, it might have bad effects on their knowledge of the English writing system. Jessica Williams and Jacqueline Evans (1998) contrasted two structures, participial adjectives such as the familiar confusion between 'He is interesting/interested' and passives such as 'The lake was frozen'. One group heard language with many examples of these structures, another group were given explanation of their 'form, meaning, and use', a third had no special teaching. The group who were given explanations did indeed do better than the other groups for the adjectives but there were only slight effects for passives. Hence there seems to be a difference in the extent to which grammatical forms lend themselves to focus on form; participial adjectives do, passives don't. Of course not too much should be made of the specific grammatical points used here; some accounts of English after all put participle adjectives like 'interested' and passives such as 'frozen' on a continuum rather than seeing them as entirely different. Nevertheless the point is that all the parts of grammar cannot be treated in the same way. Because we can help students by clearing up their confusions over past tense endings, we cannot necessarily do the same with relative clauses.

The teaching applications of FonF are discussed at greater length in Chapter 11 as part of task-based teaching. The overall feeling is that judicious use of focus on form within other activities may be useful, rather than full-scale grammar explanation. Having once seen a teacher explain in English the differences between 'must' and 'have to' to a class of Japanese children for 45 minutes, I can only agree that explicit grammar instruction is hugely ineffective; even as a native speaker, I cannot remember the differences she explained. The focus on form (FonF) argument combines several different threads, all of which are fruitful for teachers to think about: how they can highlight features of the input, subtly direct attention to grammatical errors through recasting, and slip grammatical discussion in as support for other activities, all of which are sound classroom practice. None of them are, however, novel for practising teachers who have probably always from time to time stressed words to draw the students' attention, paraphrased the students' mistakes, or given a quick grammatical explanation during the

course of a communicative exercise. The overall question is whether these activities have anything to do with 'form'; calling them 'focus on meaning' would be as suitable, given that grammatical form is there to serve meaning. Nor does it answer the question of which type of grammar is appropriate for language teaching. Much teaching simply uses structural or traditional grammar without realising that alternative approaches exist, or indeed that such approaches are not taken seriously as grammar today.

Box 2.10 Grammar and Language Teaching

- Teachers have to be aware of the many ways in which grammar comes into language learning and use and the many types of grammar that exist in choosing which grammar to teach and how to teach it.
- L2 learners go through distinct stages of acquisition, for reasons still only partially understood. Teaching can utilise the known facts about these stages in several ways.
- Many aspects of grammar do not need to be taught as they are already present in the learner's mind and need instead to be activated.
- Conscious explanation of the L2 grammar is seen as beneficial in some circumstances, as is raising of language awareness.

Discussion Topics

- 1 Here are seven techniques for teaching grammar. Decide in the light of the various approaches in this chapter what the chief advantage or disadvantage may be for each.

<i>Grammar teaching technique</i>	<i>Advantage</i>	<i>Disadvantage</i>
a) explanation
b) use of context/situation
c) fill-in-the-blank exercises
d) drilling
e) substitution tables
f) 'games'
g) consciousness-raising etc

- 2 Take any current coursebook you have to hand and look at one or two grammar-based exercises. What type of grammar does it employ? How successfully?
- 3 What aspects of grammar do you feel strongly about? For example, what things do you feel people should *not* say? For example 'between you and I' 'I never did nothing to no-one'? Why?

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- 4 How important are grammatical morphemes to the student? How much attention do they receive in teaching? How much *should* they receive?
- 5 Do the learners you know conform to the stages of the processability model?
- 6 If you should only teach what a student is ready to receive, how do you establish what the student is actually ready for?
- 7 SLA research thinks that the order of acquisition is a very important aspect of learning. How important do you think that order of presentation is to language teaching?
- 8 Are there occasions when it would be right to start by teaching the students the most difficult or most complex aspect of grammar rather than the easiest or simplest?
- 9 What aspects of grammar that you have acquired consciously do you think are useful?
- 10 What ways of making other aspects of language conscious are there (for instance, pronunciation, intonation or speech functions)? Would this be a good idea?

Further Reading

A good overview of grammatical morphemes research is in Goldschneider and DeKeyser (2001). An introduction to principles and parameters grammar can be found in Cook and Newson (2007), *Chomsky's Universal Grammar: An Introduction*. Various viewpoints on grammar and language teaching are summarised in Odlin (1994), *Pedagogical Grammar*. Otherwise the reader is referred to the books and articles cited in the text. The Processability Model is in Pienemann (1998), *Language Processing and Second-Language Development: Processability Theory*. A good collection on focus on form is Doughty and Williams (1998), *Focus on Form in Classroom Second Language Acquisition*. The most accessible of Chomsky's own recent writings on Universal Grammar is probably Chomsky (2000), *The Architecture of Language*.

Key Grammatical Terms (For This Chapter and the Rest of the Book)

Further terms are explained in *Linguistics Glossary* (available at <http://www.viviancook.uk/SLLandLT/SLL<5thed.html>).

agreement: the grammatical system in which two elements in the sentence show they go together through linked word inflections etc, for example singular verb and singular subject in the English present tense, *he goes/they go*, feminine and masculine gender *John/he, Mary/she* etc.

animacy: whether a noun is animate 'fox' or inanimate 'rock'. Not particularly important in English but vital for forming subjects of sentences in Japanese, Italian etc (see Chapter 10), which have to be animate.

articles: in English the specifiers of nouns are divided into definite articles '*the* man in the photo', indefinite articles '*a* man came in' and zero article Ø

(i.e. none) 'Man is mortal'. In other languages such as French they have to agree with the noun in gender.

case: a grammatical system in many languages in which words show their grammatical function (Subject, Object etc) by having different forms. In English surface case only affects pronouns ('I', 'me', 'my' etc) but case is still invisibly important.

content and structure words: is a way of classifying words popular in teachers' grammar since at least the 1950s, which distinguishes content/lexical words that belong in dictionaries, like nouns 'tennis' and verbs 'open', from structure/function words that need to be explained in grammar rules like 'from' and 'who'.

gender: in grammar, gender is a relationship in which some words in the sentence 'agree' with one another. In languages like English pronouns have to agree with their linked nouns in terms of whether they refer to things that are masculine or feminine—'John . . . he, his, him', 'Jane . . . her, hers'. This is called natural gender as it refers to the object's actual sex. In some other languages pronouns, articles, adjectives etc agree with the nouns that are masculine or feminine grammatically, 'Das Mädchen' (German, 'the girl', neuter), 'La table' (French, 'the table', feminine), 'Il ristorante' (Italian, 'the restaurant', masculine); this is called 'arbitrary' gender since it links to word-classes called masculine and feminine, not to the object's actual sex.

grammar: is the system of relationships between elements of the sentence that links the 'sounds' to the 'meanings', by means of word order, word forms, etc (a Chomskyan definition); 'the grammar is seen as a network of interrelated meaningful choices' (a Hallidayan definition). However the term 'grammar' is dangerous as it is used in many different ways.

grammatical morphemes: is a term in SLA research for morphemes such as '-ing' and 'the' that play a greater part in the structure of the sentence than content words such as 'horse' (lexical morphemes).

inflections: are a grammatical system for showing meaning by changing the form of words through adding morphemes. The singular noun 'map' becomes the plural 'maps' by adding the inflection 's', the present tense 'walk' becomes the past tense 'walked' by adding 'ed', and so on. Inflections are not very extensive in English, vital in Latin, and non-existent in Chinese.

morpheme: the smallest meaningful unit of grammatical structure, consisting either of a word ('toast') or part of a word ('s' in 'John's'). Morphemes are either 'free' in that they can occur as independent words, like 'good', 'fight' or 'vote', or 'bound' in that they have to be attached to something else, '-er' 'reporter', 'in-' 'independent', '-ly' 'hopefully', etc. Discussion of different ways of forming words can be found at <http://www.viviancook.uk/SLLandLT/SLL<5thed.html>.

morphology and syntax: grammar is often divided into syntax (above the word) and morphology (below the word).

morphosyntax: some SLA researchers now prefer this term to grammar. This is at odds with linguists who reserve morphosyntax for the small overlap of syntax and morphology, not as an inclusive term for both.

movement: is a way of describing the structure of the sentence *as if* elements in it moved around, typically English questions and passive constructions (i.e. it does not mean they literally move, though this may be implied in the mental process used in Processability Theory). This is illustrated in Figure 2.3. Thus the question 'Will John go?' comes from a similar structure to that underlying the statement 'John will go' by movement of 'will'.

number: is a way of signalling how many are involved, for example through the inflected forms of nouns, pronouns and verbs, 'book/books, he/they, swims/swim'. English has two numbers, singular ('he') and plural ('they'). Other languages do not have grammatical number (Japanese), or have three numbers (Old English), and so on.

parameters: in post 1981 Chomskyan syntax systematic differences between languages are captured by setting the value for a small number of parameters, like a row of light switches each set to on or off, such as the pro-drop parameter.

passive and active voice: express similar meanings to active sentences but shift the focus from the agent doing the object to the object enduring the action by movement 'I broke the mirror'/'The mirror was broken'.

past tense: in English this is usually formed by adding 'ed', in speech taking three forms /t/ walked, /d/ played and /ɪd/ waited, with many irregular forms like 'said', 'ran', 'hit' etc. A comparison of the different rules for spoken and written English is given at <http://www.viviancook.uk/SLLandLT/SLL<5thed.html>.

phrase structure: grammar links all the parts of a sentence together in a structure like that of a family tree by splitting the sentence into smaller and smaller bits, as seen on Figure 2.1. This was formalised by Chomsky in 1957, who pointed out its inadequacy as a theory of grammar, particularly for handling discontinuous elements, like 'will' and 'be' in 'Will you be late?'.

prepositions: are words like 'to', 'by' and 'with' which come before nouns in English to make Preposition Phrases 'to London by plane with Easyjet'. When they follow the noun, as in Japanese, they are called 'postpositions' 'Nippon ni' (Japan in).

principles of language: in the Universal Grammar theory, the human mind has a small set of abstract built-in principles of language that permit or prohibit certain structures from occurring in all human languages which are thus never broken in human languages, though some human languages may not need them. For example languages in which questions are not formed by syntactic movement do not need principles of movement.

pro-drop parameter (null subject parameter): in pro-drop languages the surface Subject of the sentence may be left out, as in Italian 'Sono di Torino' (am from Turin) and Chinese 'Shuo' (speak); in non-pro-drop languages

such as English, German and French the Subject must be present in the actual sentence.

progressive (continuous) aspect: in English this consists of an inflection ‘-ing’ added to the verb and the appropriate form of ‘be’: ‘I am paddling’, ‘Peter is sailing’, ‘Penny and June are swimming’ etc. It is not used for ‘private’ verbs like ‘think’ except in some regional varieties: ‘I am thinking’.

pronouns: such as ‘he’ and ‘them’ differ from nouns in that they refer to different things on different occasions: ‘She likes it’ can refer to any female being liking anything; ‘Helen likes Coltrane’ only to a specific person liking a specific object. English pronouns have case for gender (‘she’ versus ‘her’) and number (‘she’ versus ‘they’).

questions: many languages make a difference between questions that demand a yes/no answer; ‘Can you drive a lorry?’, formed by word order, and questions that are open-ended ‘What can you drive?’, which involve movement and an initial question-word such as ‘why’ or ‘who’. The latter are called question-word questions or *wh*-questions in English because question-words mostly happen to start with ‘wh’, like ‘when’ and ‘who’.

subject: can be defined in many ways. In one definition it is the Noun Phrase of the sentence alongside the Verb Phrase in its phrase structure, i.e. ‘(The man) (fed the dog)’ in Figure 2.1. The subject is compulsory in the actual sentence in non-pro-drop languages but may be omitted in pro-drop languages like Italian; it often acts as the ‘agent of the action’ in English and agrees in number with the verb.

word order: for many languages the order of the main elements in the sentence is crucial, whether Subject (S) Verb (V) Object (O), as in English ‘People love pizza’, SOV in Japanese, VSO in Arabic, or whatever. Other word order variations are whether the language has Prepositions before the Noun Phrase ‘in New Orleans’ or postpositions after the Noun Phrase ‘Nippon ni’ (Japan in) and whether questions or subordinate clauses have distinctive word orders.

3 Learning and Teaching Vocabulary

The acquisition of vocabulary at first sight seems straightforward; we all know you need a large number of words to speak a language. Just how many is anybody's guess: one estimate claims 20,000 word 'families', i.e. counting related words as one word—'teacher' /'teaches' /'teaching'/'taught' etc.

Box 3.1 A Chinese Student's View of Vocabulary



In the middle school, there is a word list in the books on which there are Chinese meanings following the English words. Before classes began, I would find the new words in the texts with the help of the list. Teachers would ask us to read them again and again. Then I recited the words to memorize them. It was a boring period especially when the words were complex. After explaining the meaning and the form of the words, teachers would lead us to see their use in the texts. Then we were given exercises, such as changing the right form of the words according to the context; filling the gaps; and matching. In high school and college, I was independent to study vocabulary by myself. When I encounter a new individual word, I would look up a dictionary. When I see a word in context, I will first guess the meaning. After reading the entire context, I will look up the words one by one in dictionary. But at this time, I will not to recite them on purpose. So the words I often read would be remembered.

But there is far more to acquiring vocabulary than the acquisition of words. The past twenty years have seen a massive explosion in research into the acquisition of vocabulary, seen in books such as Nation (2013). However, much of it is concerned with the acquisition of isolated words in laboratory experiments and is tested by whether people remember them, not whether they can use them. While such research gives some hints, much of it has little to say about how we can teach people to use a second language vocabulary.

3.1. How Do Words Mean (In Two Languages)?

Focusing Questions

- When you learn a new word in a second language, do you try to keep it separate from the words of your first language?
- When you teach a new word do you try to link it to words in the first language, say by translation, or do you keep it separate?

To most people a word has a single distinct meaning that links the ‘real’ world and a concept in the human mind, the relationship called reference diagrammed in Figure 3.1. The word ‘cat’ refers to the thing , i.e. it links a real cat to the concept of ‘cat’. This relationship is inside the human mind; there is no other reason why  should go with ‘cat’.

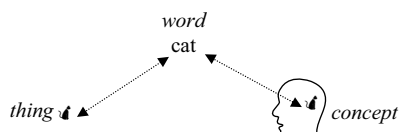


Figure 3.1 Linking things and concepts.

However vocabulary is never that simple. ‘Cat’ can also refer to people ‘She’s a cat’, a kind of jazz fan ‘a cool cat’, something that is extremely good ‘The cat’s whiskers’, a criminal ‘cat burglar’, a disastrous intervention ‘to put the cat among the pigeons’ and many more. Indeed like ‘cat’ most words in English have more than one meaning. The extent to which languages have words with many meanings (polysemous) varies from one language to another, Italian being far more one-word-one-meaning than English for example. Some linguists indeed deny that English words have central meanings; does the core meaning of ‘mouse’ ‘small mammal’ help for learning ‘computer mouse’, ‘mouse’ ‘bruise’ or ‘mouse around’ ‘investigate’?

So learning a language means far more than learning one meaning per word. It involves learning a variety of information about a word, such as:

- ‘cat’ is pronounced /kæt/ and written <cat>;
- ‘cat’ is a countable noun and alive so you can say ‘the cats died’ and so on.

Each of the thousands of words we know is as complicated. The word with the highest number of distinct meanings in the Oxford English Dictionary (OED; Oxford University Press, n.d.) is *set*, with no less than 430.

But using words to refer to discrete objects in the world is only one type of word meaning. Many nouns refer to abstractions like ‘people’ and ‘government’, to things we can’t see such as ‘air’ and ‘truth’, or to things that only exist in our imaginations like ‘unicorns’ and ‘Kryptonite’. Nouns are only one type of word; we also need lexical words like verbs ‘fly’, adverbs ‘highly’ and

adjectives ‘red’, as well as structure words like prepositions ‘for’ and articles ‘the’ that have primarily grammatical meanings. According to rough calculations a speaker of a language knows around 60,000 words and children learn ten of them every day of their lives up to at least fifteen (Bloom, 2002).

For linguists the most important thing is the relationships that words have with each other in the mind. ‘Cat’ is not ‘dog’, i.e. the two words reflect a categorisation of objects in the world and are ‘antonyms’: words contrast with other words. ‘Cat’ is a ‘basic’ level term included in the ‘superordinate’ level term animal and itself including ‘subordinate’ level terms ‘kittens’, ‘Siamese’ and ‘Persian’: words are structured in levels of categorisation. According to the Edinburgh Word Association Thesaurus (2014), the chief associations for cat in our minds are: ‘dog’, ‘mouse’, ‘black’, ‘animal’, ‘eyes’ (‘catseyes’ are reflectors on the road surface), ‘gut’ (‘cat gut’ is a kind of string used in violins) and ‘kitten’. Learning a word is far more than just learning a simple relationship between a thing and a concept.

So what happens in a second language? One possibility is seen in Figure 3.2 below, using English as L1 and French as L2—though of course it is a cheat as it uses a picture rather than a real object—to paraphrase Magritte ‘Ceci n’est pas un chat’—a picture of a cat isn’t a cat.

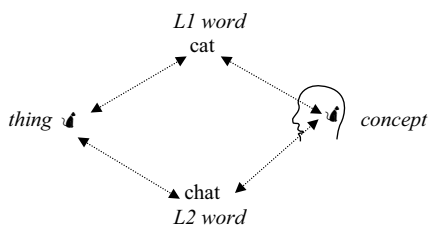



Figure 3.2 Linking things and concepts in two languages.

The thing  connects to the L2 word ‘chat’ as well as to the L1 word ‘cat’; the words link in turn to the same concept of ‘cat’. De Groot (2002) calls the L1 and L2 words ‘cat’ and ‘chat’ the lexical level, the concept of ‘cat’ the conceptual level. The interesting question is how the two languages interact.

One possibility is that the real-world object links to the L2 word ‘chat’ and then to the concept, the parallel route shown in Figure 3.2; the link between L2 word and the L1 word is via the concept. Another possibility seen in Figure 3.3 is that the learner does not link the object to the concept but the word ‘chat’ to the word ‘cat’ at the lexical level: L2 access to the concept is mediated by the L1. The direct route from object to concept has been diverted via the L1.

These two alternatives hark back to the distinction between *compound bilingualism* in which the languages are closely tied together in the mind and *coordinate bilingualism* in which they exist side by side (Weinreich, 1953). It’s a matter of how separate the languages are in the mind.

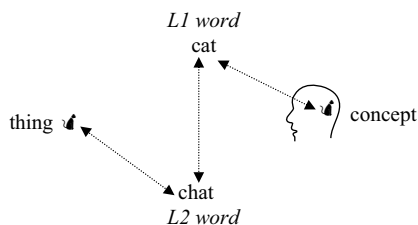


Figure 3.3 Linking things and concepts via the L1.

The complexity of vocabulary in L2 users' minds is thus more than doubled. To the vast number of words with many meanings in the L1 are added the vast numbers of L2 words via direct or indirect links to the concepts. The L2 user has to learn all the other attributes of words, for example not just the associations for *cat* but also those for *chat*, some of which may be similar, some quite different.

The two models vary in how they relate the two lexicons in the mind, which might be entirely distinct or might be inextricably tied together. Some research indeed shows that it is impossible to switch one language off while you use another. Spivey and Marian (1999) for example tested people's eye-movements as they processed pictures of objects, showing they never switched off either language.

Box 3.2 Words in the L2 User's Mind

- The L1 and the L2 sets of vocabulary in the L2 user's mind may be related in various ways, ranging from completely separate to completely integrated.
- Research suggests that in many cases the two vocabulary stores are closely linked.

3.2. Word Frequency

Focusing Questions

- What do you think are the ten most frequent words in English? Would you teach them all to beginners?
- Why do you think frequency is important?

Much teaching has been based on the idea that the most frequently used words in the target language should be taught first. Almost all beginners' books restrict the vocabulary they introduce in the first year to about a thousand frequent items. My beginners' coursebook *People and Places* (Cook, 1980), for instance, had about 950 separate words; the Japanese course *New Crown*

English (Takahashi, 2012) lists about 750. Traditional syllabuses for language teaching usually include lists of the most frequent words.

The French course *Voix et Images de France* (1961) was perhaps the first to choose its vocabulary by actually counting how often words were used by native speakers. The *COBUILD English Course* (Willis and Willis, 1988; COBUILD stands for ‘Collins and Birmingham University International Data Base’) similarly based itself on a corpus of speech. Its first lesson teaches 91 words including ‘person’ and ‘secretary’, unlikely to be in the opening lessons of most coursebooks. Now that vast collections of language are easily accessible on the computer, counting the frequencies of words is fairly simple; the easiest method is using Search and Replace in Word, which will tell you the number of occurrences; or use the Google ngram viewer to search vast numbers of books. Box 3.3 lists the fifty most frequent words in the British National Corpus (BNC) sample of 100 million words. The most frequent word ‘the’ occurs no less than 6,187,267 times and the fiftieth word ‘her’ 218,258 times. The top 100 words account for 45% of all the words in the BNC; in other words, knowing 100 words would allow you to recognise nearly half of the words you meet in English.

Box 3.3 The Fifty Most Frequent Words in English (BNC)

1 the	11 I	21 are	31 which	41 their
2 of	12 for	22 not	32 or	42 has
3 and	13 you	23 this	33 we	43 would
4 a	14 he	24 but	34 an	44 what
5 in	15 be	25 's (poss)	35 n't	45 will
6 to	16 with	26 they	36 's (verb)	46 there
7 It	17 on	27 his	37 were	47 if
8 is	18 that (conj)	28 from	38 that (det)	48 can
9 was	19 by	29 had	39 been	49 all
10 to (prep)	20 at	30 she	40 have	50 her

The first surprise on looking at this list is that most of the words feature in the discussion of grammar in Chapter 2 since they are structure words such as articles ‘the’, pronouns ‘it’, auxiliaries ‘would’ and forms of the verb ‘be’. Usually the teaching of structure words is seen as part of grammar, not vocabulary. Frequency is taken to apply more to content words. Nevertheless we should not forget that the most frequent words in the language are mostly structure words: the top 100 words only include three nouns.

The twenty most frequent words in the BNC for three types of content word are given in Box 3.4.

Box 3.4 The Twenty Most Frequent Nouns, Verbs and Adjectives in English (BNC)

Nouns		Verbs		Adjectives	
1 time	11 part	1 say	11 give	1 new	11 British
2 people	12 number	2 know	12 want	2 good	12 possible
3 way	13 children	3 get	13 find	3 old	13 large
4 year	14 system	4 go	14 mean	4 different	14 young
5 government	15 case	5 see	15 look	5 local	15 able
6 day	16 thing	6 make	16 begin	6 small	16 political
7 man	17 end	7 think	17 help	7 great	17 public
8 world	18 group	8 take	18 become	8 social	18 high
9 work	19 woman	9 come	19 tell	9 important	19 available
10 life	20 party	10 use	20 seem	10 national	20 full

This list also has some surprises for teachers. The nouns ‘government’ and ‘system’, the verbs ‘become’ and ‘seem’, and the adjectives ‘social’ and ‘public’ are seldom taught in beginners’ courses despite their high frequency. Many of the nouns have vague, general meanings like ‘people’ and ‘thing’; many are abstract like ‘seem’ or ‘available’ or involve subjective evaluation ‘think’ and ‘good’. Typically the first lesson of the elementary course *Move* (Bowler and Parminster, 2007) concentrates on specific concrete nouns like ‘cinema’ and ‘shops’ and verbs for actions such as ‘study’ or ‘visit’.

While word frequency has some relevance to teaching, other factors are also important, such as the ease with which the meaning of an item can be demonstrated (‘blue’ is easier to explain than ‘local’) and its appropriateness for what the students want to say (‘plane’ is more useful than ‘system’ if you want to travel). Indeed the frequency-based French course *Voix et Images* (1961) needed to amplify the list of frequent words with those that were ‘available’ to the speaker, which may not necessarily be very common. A study of what Australians talk about in their work-breaks (Balandin and Iacono, 1999) found it consisted of 347 words; the ones that are most novel for teaching are perhaps: *bloody, couple, crew, dunno, gotta, gonna, kids, married*.

The word ‘surname’ found in lesson 1 of *Changes* (Richards, 1998) and module 1 of *New Cutting Edge* (Cunningham, Moor and Eales, 2005) is far from frequent, in fact number 19467 on the BNC list, but it is certainly available to speakers and, quite rightly, needs to be taught in the very early stages, particularly when the naming systems differ between languages and it is unclear which of a person’s names might count as their surname in

English; the use of 'last name' in Unit 1 of *Touchstone* (McCarthy, McCarten and Sandiford, 2005) seems particularly dubious given that family names come first in Chinese.

Box 3.5 Test How Many Words You Know

Complete these definitions and then look at the answers on page 82.

- A a round object often used as a toy is a b_____
- B something you carry and put things in is a b_____
- C a pipe or channel through which things flow is a c_____
- D to give way to someone is to y_____
- E a person who works without being paid is a v_____
- F a preparation for preventing infectious disease is a v_____
- G a heavy glass with a handle is known as a t_____
- H a type of brain chemical is s_____
- I a sailor's word for a clumsy fellow is a l_____
- J the effects of wind, rain etc on objects is w_____
- K a heavy wheel used to store power is a f_____
- L something engraved on stone is l_____

Fuller forms of this test are in *It's All in a Word* (Cook, 2009a) and online (available at <http://www.viviancook.uk/SLLandLT/SLL<5thed.html>).

Influential as frequency has been in teaching, it has not played a major role in SLA research. It belongs more to the descriptive Lang, sense of 'language' as a collection of sentences. It is true that you are more likely to remember a word you meet every day than one you only meet once. But there are many other factors that make students learn words. A swear-word '****', said accidentally when the teacher drops the tape-recorder, is likely to be remembered by the students forever even if it is never repeated. Common words like 'because' and 'necessary' are still spelled wrongly after students have been meeting them for many years.

Frequency of vocabulary has been applied in teaching mainly to the choice of words to be taught. In a sense the most useful words for the student are obviously going to be those that are common. But it is unnecessary to worry about frequency too much. If the students are getting reasonably natural English from their coursebooks and their teachers, the common words will be supplied automatically. The most frequent words do not differ greatly from one type of English to another; the commonest five words in Jane Austen's novels are 'the', 'to', 'and', 'of', 'a', in seven-year-old native children's writing 'and', 'the', 'a', 'I', 'to', in the BNC 'the', 'of', 'and', 'a', 'in', and in Japanese

students of English 'I', 'to', 'the', 'you', 'and'. Any natural English the students hear will have the proper frequencies of words; it is only the edited texts and conversations of the classroom that do not have these properties, for better or worse.

Box 3.6 Word Frequency

- Frequency is usually established nowadays from a large corpus of a language, such as the BNC for English.
- Words vary extremely in how often they are used.
- Frequency is only one factor in the choice of words to teach.

3.3. Knowledge of Words

Focusing Questions

- What do you know about a word like 'man' if you speak English?
- When you teach students the meaning of a word, what do you mean by 'meaning' and how do you teach it?

Most people assume that knowing a word is a matter of knowing that 'plane' in English means ✈ or that the English word 'plane' means the same as 'l'aereo' in Italian, as with English 'cat' and French 'chat' described in Section 3.1. So learning vocabulary means acquiring long lists of words with their meanings, whether through some direct link or via translation into the first language. Coursebooks often have vocabulary lists that organise the words in the course alphabetically, sometimes with brief translations. The Italian coursebook *Italian Now* (Danesi, 2012) indeed lists 'aereo airplane'.

However a word in the Lang₅ sense of language as knowledge in the mind is more than its meaning. Let us illustrate some aspects of vocabulary with the word 'man'. What does any person who knows English know about 'man'?

Forms of the Word

- *Pronunciation.* We know how to pronounce 'man' as /mæn/. Each word is associated in our memory with a specific pronunciation and is tied in to the pronunciation rules of the language; for instance 'man' is pronounced /mən/ in compounds such as 'chairman'.
- *Spelling.* If we can read, we know that the word is spelled as <man>. Words have specific spellings and are linked to the spelling rules of the

language. The letter <n> in <man> for example needs to be doubled when followed by <-ing> or <-ed>: 'Over-manning is a real problem in the car industry'.

Grammatical Properties

- *Grammatical category.* We know that the word 'man' is either a noun ('a man') or a verb ('to man'), that is to say we know the grammatical category or categories that each word belongs to. This dictates how it behaves in the structure of the sentence; as a noun, 'man' can be part of a noun phrase acting as the subject or object of the sentence 'The man left', 'They shot the man'; if it is a verb, it can be part of the verb phrase 'They manned the barricades'. Like most nouns, it will have a possessive form 'man's' and a plural form 'men'. While 'man' as a noun occurs 58,769 times in the BNC, as a verb it only occurs 12 times.
- *Possible and impossible structures.* We know the types of structure that 'man' can be used in. When 'man' is a verb, the sentence must have a subject that is animate 'She manned the barricades', not 'It manned the barricades'; and it must have an object 'They manned the barricades', not 'They manned'. This is called the 'argument structure' of the verb—which arguments (subject, object, etc) may or may not go with it in the structure of the sentence. The Universal Grammar model of language acquisition, described in Chapter 10, claims that the argument structure of words is pivotal in language acquisition. Maurice Gross (1991) found 12,000 'simple' verbs in French of which no two could be used in exactly the same way in sentences.
- *Idiosyncratic grammatical information.* The plural spoken form of 'man' is /men/; the written form is <men>; i.e. we know that it is an exception to the usual rules for forming noun plurals in English with 's'. In addition the noun 'man' can be either countable as in Robert Burns' 'A man's a man for a' that' or uncountable as in Alexander Pope's 'The proper study of Mankind is Man', depending on the sense with which it is used.
- *Word building.* There is a whole family of words related to 'man', such as 'mannish', 'manlike', 'unmanly', made by adding various prefixes such as 'un-' and suffixes such as '-ish' to the stem 'man'.

Lexical Properties

- *Collocations.* We know many more or less set expressions in which the word 'man' conventionally goes with other words, such as 'my good man', 'man in the street', 'man-to-man', 'man of God', 'to separate the men from the boys', 'my man Jeeves' and many others.
- *Appropriateness.* 'My man' may be used as a form of address: 'Hi my man'. The Prime Minister might be surprised at being greeted with 'Hi my man'; a pop star might not. We have to know when and with whom it is appropriate to use a word.

Box 3.7 Some Odd Kinds of English Words

See <http://www.viviancook.uk/SLLandLT/SLL<5thed.html>.

Spoonerisms

Chish and fips, par cark, Beeping Sleauty, roaring with pain

I'd rather have a bottle in front of me than a frontal lobotomy
(attributed variously to Dorothy Parker, W.C. Field and Uncle
Tom Cobley)

Blends

Britpop, Eurasia, travelogue, smog, spam (sp[iced] [h]am), modem
(mo[dulator] dem[odulator]), Oxbridge (Ox[ford] [Cam]bridge),
motel (mot[or] [ho]tel), Cathestant (Cath[olic] [Prot]estant)

Infixes

Absobloominglutely, theojollylogical

Reduplicatives

bye-bye, hush-hush, haha, blah blah, girly girly, gaga, flip-flop,
mish-mash, pitter-patter, ping-pong, walky-talky, hanky-panky,
mumbo-jumbo

Meaning

- *General meanings.* We know general properties about the meaning of 'man' such as 'male', 'adult', 'human being', 'concrete', 'animate'. These aspects of meaning, called 'semantic features' or 'components of meaning', are shared with many other words in the language.
- *Specific meanings.* We know a range of specific senses for 'man'. The OED has seventeen main entries for 'man' as a noun ranging from 'A human being (irrespective of sex or age)' to 'One of the pieces used in chess' (Oxford University Press, n.d.).

Acquiring a word is not just linking a form with a translated meaning 'man uomo', as in the *Italian Now* (Danesi, 2012) wordlist. It is acquiring a complex range of information about its spoken and written form, the ways it is used in grammatical structures and word combinations, and diverse aspects of meaning. Knowing that 'man' equals 'uomo' is only one small part of the total knowledge necessary for using it. Of course nobody completely knows every

aspect of a word. I may know how to read something but not how to say it; for years I assumed ‘dugout’ was pronounced /dʌgu:t/ rather than /dʌgaʊt/ by analogy with ‘mahout’. Nor does any individual speaker possess all the dictionary meanings for a word. The OED meaning for ‘man’ of ‘a cairn or pile of stones marking a summit or prominent point of a mountain’ (Oxford University Press, n.d.) would not be known to many people outside Cumbria.

Hence the message for language teaching is that vocabulary is everywhere. It connects to the systems of phonology and orthography through the actual forms of the words, to the systems of morphology and syntax through the ways that the word enters into grammatical structures and through grammatical changes to the word’s form, and to the systems of meaning through its range of general and specific meanings and uses. To quote Noam Chomsky (1995, p. 131) ‘language acquisition is in essence a matter of determining lexical idiosyncrasies’. Effective acquisition of vocabulary can never be just the learning of individual words and their meanings in isolation. The pre-intermediate course *International Express* (Taylor, 1996) admirably has a section in the very first unit entitled ‘Learning Vocabulary’, which encourages students to organise words in topics, word groups and word maps, and gets them to keep a vocabulary notebook for recording meaning and pronunciation. Later units have sections on ‘word-power’, mostly treating vocabulary in topic groups such as ‘food’ or word families such as ‘business headlines’. As in most coursebooks, the main emphasis here is on learning vocabulary as meaning, organised in a systematic, logical fashion, rather than on the other aspects mentioned above, which are usually dealt with incidentally in the texts and dialogues rather than in specific vocabulary work.

3.4. Types of Meaning

Focusing Questions

- What do you mean by meaning?
- What nouns can you remember learning first in your first language?
In your second?

It seems easy enough to say what a word means. To an English speaker ‘plane’ means ✈, ‘cat’ means 🐈. Yet linguists have spent at least a century exploring the different types of meaning that words can have. Here we look at three types that have been linked to L2 acquisition.

Components of Meaning

Often the meaning of a word can be broken up into smaller components. Thus the meaning of ‘girl’ is made up of ‘female’, ‘human’, and ‘non-adult’. The meaning of ‘apple’ is made up of ‘fruit’, ‘edible’, ‘round’, and so on. The components view of meaning was used to study the development of words such as ‘before’ and ‘big’ in English children. At one stage they know one component of the meaning but not the other. They know ‘big’ and ‘small’ share a meaning component to do

with size but think they both mean 'big'; or they know that 'before' and 'after' are to do with 'time' but do not know which one means 'prior' (Clark, 1971). L2 beginners in English indeed found it much easier to understand 'Mary talks before Susan shouts' than 'Caroline sings after Sally dances' (Cook, 1977); they hadn't acquired the component 'prior'. Paul Nation (1990) describes learners of Samoan who confuse 'umi' (long) with 'puupuu' (short) because they have acquired the component 'length' for both but have not sorted out which is which.

Students are then learning components of meaning for a word, not necessarily all of the word's meaning at once. An informal version of this components approach can be found in coursebooks such as *The Words You Need* (Rudzka et al., 1981). Students look at a series of 'Word Study' displays showing the different meaning components of words. For example, a chart gives words that share the meaning 'look at/over' such as 'check', 'examine', 'inspect', 'scan' and 'scrutinise'. It shows which have the component of meaning 'detect errors', which 'determine that rules are observed', and so on. Students are encouraged to use the meaning components to build up the vocabulary while reading texts.

Lexical Relations

Words do not exist by themselves, however, but only in relationship to other words. The meaning of 'hot' relates to 'cold'; the meaning of 'run' to 'walk', of 'high' to 'low', of 'pain' to 'pleasure', and so on. When we speak, we choose one word out of all those we have available, rejecting all the words we could have said: 'I love you' potentially contrasts with 'I hate you'. Words function within systems of meaning.

A metaphor that is often used for meaning is traffic lights. When a traffic light has two colours, red and green, red means 'stop' contrasting with green 'go'. Hence 'red' doesn't just mean 'stop', it also means 'not green', i.e. 'don't go', a system with two options. Add another colour, called 'amber' in England, and the whole system changes, with amber acting as a warning that something is going to change, having two possibilities: amber alone, officially 'stop' (unofficially, 'prepare to stop'), and amber and red together, officially 'stop' (unofficially 'prepare to go'). If a simple three colour system can lead to such complexity of meanings (and indeed traffic accidents), think what happens with the thousands of words in any human language.

In his book *Lexical Semantics* Cruse (1986) brought out many relationships between words. Words can be **synonyms** if they have the same meaning—'truthful' and 'honest'; **hyponyms** if they belong to the same group with a single superordinate name—'cats', 'dogs' and 'horses' are kinds of animals. Each category may have many variations. For example **antonyms** are pairs with the opposite meaning—'good' versus 'bad'. But there are several ways in which words can be opposites: 'top' and 'bottom' form a scale with extremes (called antipodals); 'concave' and 'convex' have reverse directions (counterparts); 'rise' and 'fall' are movements in opposite directions (reversives); 'above' and 'below' are the relationship of one direction to another (converses). And doubtless many more. My humorous YouTube video *Words for Wine* (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jZu3NJ3tGrc>) demonstrates 'scales' of meaning applied to wine-tasting.

Prototypes

Some aspects of meaning cannot be split up into components but are taken in as wholes. According to Eleanor Rosch’s *prototype* theory (Rosch, 1977), an English person who is asked to give an example of a typical bird is more likely to say ‘sparrow’ than ‘penguin’ or ‘ostrich’; sparrows are closer to the prototype for ‘birds’ in the mind than penguins and ostriches. Rosch’s theory suggests that there is an ideal of meaning in our minds—‘birdiness’ in this case—from which other things depart. Speakers have a central form of a concept and the things they see and talk about correspond better or worse with this prototype.

Prototype theory claims that children first learn words that are ‘basic’ because they reflect aspects of the world that stand out automatically from the rest of what they see—prototypes. ‘Sparrow’ is a ‘basic level’ term compared to a ‘superordinate level’ term like ‘bird’, or a ‘subordinate level’ term like ‘house sparrow’. The basic level of vocabulary is easier to use and to learn. On this foundation, children build higher and lower levels of vocabulary. Some examples of the three levels of vocabulary are seen below.

Superordinate terms	furniture	bird	fruit
Basic level terms	table, chair	sparrow, robin	apple, strawberry
Subordinate terms	coffee table, armchair	field sparrow	Russet, wild strawberry

Figure 3.4 Rosch’s three levels of vocabulary.

L1 children learn basic level terms like ‘apple’ before they learn the superordinate term ‘fruit’ or the subordinate term ‘Golden Delicious’. They start with the most basic level as it is easiest for the mind to perceive. Only after this has been learnt do they go on to words that are more general or more specific. Some of my own research (Cook, 1982) showed that L2 learners first of all acquire basic terms such as ‘table’, secondly more general terms like ‘furniture’, and finally more specific terms like ‘coffee table’. Rosch’s levels are therefore important to L2 learning as well as to first language acquisition.

This sequence of levels, however, is different from the usual order of presentation in language teaching in which the teacher introduces a whole group of words simultaneously. For example, in Unit 4 of *English Unlimited* (Doff, 2010, p. 32), the heading ‘food’ is followed by the instructions ‘Match the words with the pictures’, with drawings of a fish, a loaf of bread etc. According to prototype theory, this is misguided; the superordinate term ‘food’ should come *after* the students have the basic level terms such as ‘fish’ and ‘bread’, not before.

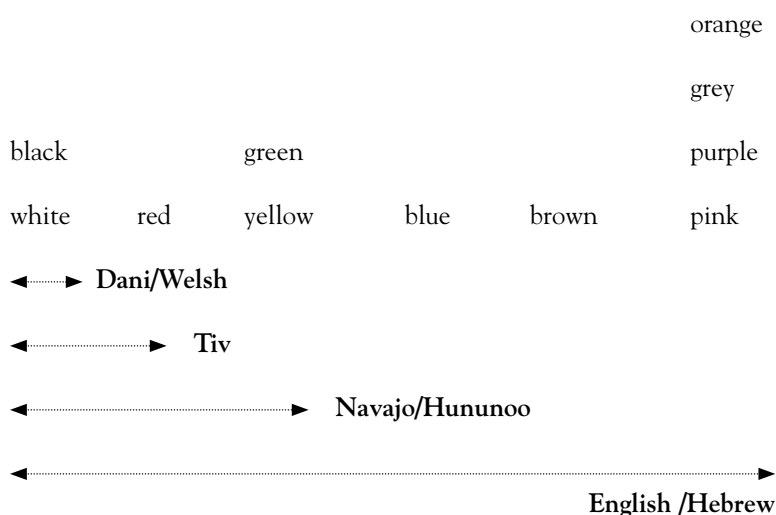
The most important early words are basic level terms. The human mind automatically starts from this concrete level rather than from a more abstract level or a more specific one. Starting with vocabulary items that can be easily shown in pictures fits in with the Rosch theory; grouping them prematurely into superordinate categories does not. For example *speakout* (Eales and

Oakes, 2012) has photos of twenty-five foods in a Photo Bank, introduced by the superordinate 'food' in 'Match the name of the food with photographs' (perhaps showing the limitations of teaching with books as computer apps can present and practise such photos more conveniently). A drawing can be readily recognised as a chair but is less easy to see as an armchair or as furniture. Hence prototype theory ties in with the audiovisual method of language teaching that introduces new vocabulary with a picture of what it represents, in an appropriate cultural setting. This theory has particular implications for teaching of vocabulary at the beginning stages.

Are Meanings Universal?

So far as meaning is concerned, the interesting question that has been raised over the years is whether speakers of all languages possess the same concepts despite variation in the words used to express them or whether meanings vary from one language to another as well as the words that convey them. The well-known example is how people see colours. Languages have rather different colour vocabularies; Greek, Italian and many other languages have two 'blue' colours where English people see only light blue and dark blue; Japanese has names for colours that to an English eye are either in between two colours or are different shades of the same colour. Originally research showed that languages could be arranged on a single scale, as seen in Box 3.8 (a colour version can be found on the website <http://www.viviancook.uk/SLLandLT/SLL<5thed.html>).

Box 3.8 The Universal Colour Scale, according to Berlin and Kay



This means that the two languages Dani and Welsh only have two basic colour words for black and white; Tiv has three, black, white and red; Navajo and Hununoo have five, adding green and yellow; English and Hebrew have eleven. All the languages of the world fit into this scale somewhere. Learning another language may mean dropping some colour distinctions, say 'red' if you are learning Welsh, adding some colour distinction, say blue if you are a Navajo learning English. Again it isn't just the words that you are learning in another language but their meaning relationships; 'black' in Welsh means 'not white', in English, additionally 'not red/blue/ . . .': the borders may be different. For example, to an English eye the green in a Japanese traffic light looks blue. An Englishman who had never driven in Japan before stopped at a traffic light and his wife said 'Don't forget to go when the green light comes on'; he sat without moving off for some time till she said 'Why don't you go?' and he replied 'There's a blue light but it hasn't turned green yet'.

So do people who speak Japanese see the world differently from those who speak English? Or do they see it in the same way but speak differently? This issue is called linguistic relativity: is the world seen differently from different points of view? In the past decade a fair amount of research has shown that differences in thinking go with differences in language. Most human languages talk about a speaker's location in terms of 'front/back' and 'left/right'; the whiteboard is behind me, the students are in front of me, the door is on my left, the window is on my right. However, Stephen Levinson (1996) found speakers of Australian aboriginal languages talk about location as 'north/south' and 'east/west'. Now the whiteboard is in the east, the students in the west, the door on the north, the window on the south. Does this make a difference to people's thinking? Well try blindfolding two speakers of aboriginal and English and abandoning them in the middle of a forest; which would you think finds their way out first?

If you know two languages, what happens to your thinking? Will you always think like speakers of the L1 or will you shift to thinking like speakers of the L2 or will you think like neither of them? SLA research has been investigating this issue in controlled experiments in recent years. Greeks who know English separate the two blues differently from Greeks who do not know English (Athanasopoulos, 2009). Japanese who know English tend to categorise things more as 'shapes' in an English way than as 'substances' in a Japanese way (Cook et al., 2006). Hence learning another language can have more far-reaching effects on the learner than anybody imagined; you may think in a slightly different way if you know another language.

Box 3.9 Ways of Meaning

- Words have many different kinds of meaning, whether sharing general components, linked in lexical relations or related to prototypes and levels.
- While some aspects of meaning are universal, there are differences between languages in how they express concepts of colour etc, which may affect the thinking of L2 users.

3.5. Strategies for Understanding and Learning Vocabulary

Focusing Questions

- If you meet a new word, how do you go about finding out its meaning and remembering it?
- How do you use a dictionary in your second language? In your first?










Keyword

mnemnotechnics: ways of remembering new information by deliberately organising it and linking it to existing information in the mind

Students are often acutely aware of their ignorance of vocabulary, unlike their unawareness of their ignorance of grammar and phonology. When you want to say something in a second language, it's the words that you feel you struggle for rather than the grammar or pronunciation. Hence L2 users have devised strategies to compensate for words they do not know, discussed in Chapter 6. Here we shall look at some of the vocabulary strategies students use, with or without their teacher's approval. First test yourself on the task below.

Box 3.10 Vocabulary Learning Task

Here are some German words for you to learn. Spend three minutes on this and then do the test at the end of the chapter on page 83.

				
1	2	3	4	5
die Schere	das Telefon	die Hand	das Flugzeug	der Mann
				
6	7	8	9	10
das Fahrrad	das Fernsehapparat	der Schlüssel	der Bliestift	das Segelboot

Strategies for Understanding the Meaning of Words

One main issue is learning the meaning of new words. Most recent teaching methods such as task-based learning or communicative language teaching have relied either on the context to make sense of the word or on traditional techniques such as pictures, explanation or translation into the students' L1. Conveying the meaning of new words is crucial to language teaching; it is for example the vital stage in Krashen's Natural Approach, Dodson's Bilingual Method and the Audiovisual Method.

Suppose that someone says to you in a restaurant in Italy 'Scusi, è occupato questo posto?'. You think you can work out everything in the sentence apart from the word 'posto' (Excuse me is this **** occupied?). What do you do?

Guess from the Situation or Context

The situation is sitting at a restaurant table; the person is a stranger—what could the sentence be? ‘Are you waiting for somebody?’, ‘Can I borrow the mustard?’ ‘Could I borrow this chair?’ ‘Can I sit down here?’ Looking at the probabilities you decide that the word ‘posto’ must mean ‘seat’ in English. This is the natural process of getting meaning for unknown words that we use all the time in our first language: if we encounter a new word in our reading, how often do we bother to check precisely what it means in a dictionary? Checking back on a novel I have just started, I discover that pages 1 and 2 had ‘baulks of sheer-sided soil’, ‘a severe weather advisory’ and ‘a layer of regolith’; none of the three nouns, ‘balk’, ‘advisory’ and ‘regolith’, are part of my vocabulary and yet I had not noticed this while reading. I had presumably deduced enough from the context not to interfere with reading: ‘balk’ must be a pile of some kind, ‘advisory’ must be an advice-notice (actually according to the OED this is North American usage) and ‘regolith’ must be some geological term for a layer of stone.

Guessing is a much-used strategy in a second language. But of course it can go wrong. On the one hand we may come to quite the wrong conclusion: one of my postgraduate students gave a seminar talk in which she distinguished ‘schema’ theory from ‘schemata’ theory, having deduced these were different words rather than the singular and plural of the same word. On the other hand much language is unpredictable from the situation; in a German supermarket the only remark that was addressed to me was ‘Könnten Sie bitte das Preisschildchen für mich lesen da ich meine Brille zu Hause gelassen habe?’ (Could you read this label to me as I have left my glasses at home?).

Use a Dictionary

The most popular way of getting the meaning of a new word like ‘posto’ is to look it up in a dictionary, according to Norbert Schmitt’s survey of students (Schmitt, 1997). The use of dictionaries in language teaching has always been to some extent controversial. There is inevitably a question of choosing which type of dictionary to use:

- **monolingual** dictionaries versus **translation** dictionaries. If you believe that the word-stores of the two languages must be kept distinct in the mind, you will go for monolingual L2 dictionaries. If you believe that the words for the two languages are effectively kept in one joint store, you will prefer translation dictionaries.
- **reception** dictionaries versus **production** dictionaries such as the *Language Activator* (1993). Production dictionaries permit one to hunt for the precise word to express something one wants to say. If you decide to talk about your problems, you look up the concept ‘problem’ and see which of the twelve related ideas (e.g. ‘ways of saying that a person causes

problems') best expresses what you want to say; a version of this is found in the thesaurus that forms part of word-processing programs—the thesaurus in Word tells me that other ways of saying 'dictionary' are 'lexicon', 'word list' and 'glossary' though, unlike a production dictionary, it does not tell me the differences in meaning between them.

- **corpus-based** dictionaries such as COBUILD versus **example-based** dictionaries such as OED. Traditional dictionaries such as OED depended on collecting a large sample of words from many sources, including other dictionaries. Recent dictionaries have been based on large-scale collections of real spoken and written language processed by computer. OED may give the precise technical meaning of a word, COBUILD its everyday use. For example according to the OED 'bronchitis' is 'Inflammation of the bronchial mucous membrane'; according to COBUILD 'An illness like a very bad cough, in which your bronchial tubes become sore and infected'. One definition gives an accurate medical definition; the other suits a lay-person's understanding.

Dictionary use can only be minimal during speech, however important it may be during reading and writing. At best students can use it as a prop for the occasional word, say, in a lecture, as many of my overseas students seem to do with their pocket electronic dictionaries.

Make Deductions from the Word Form

Another way of discovering the meaning of a word is to try to deduce it from its actual form; 69% of students in Schmitt's survey found this a useful strategy. The Italian word 'posto' may not be very helpful in this respect, as it provides few clues to its structure. The English example 'regolith' is more useful. I have encountered other words with the morpheme 'lith' before such as 'megalith' which I understand to be a big stone and 'Neolithic' which I understand to mean 'stone age'; hence I guess that 'lith' is something to do with stone. 'rego' provides no help—in fact if I had simply related it to the English word 'rug' I wouldn't have been far out according to the OED (Oxford University Press, n.d.), which claims it was indeed a mistaken interpretation of the Greek for 'blanket'. Again it is easy to go wrong in making these deductions; my interpretation of 'regolith' as 'layer of stone' gave me sufficient understanding to read a novel but would hardly impress a geologist. *International Express* (Taylor, 1996) practises word forms by getting the students to do the reverse operation of adding prefixes such as 'un-' or 'in-' to words such as 'efficient' and 'sociable'.

Link to Cognates

One more way is to resort to a language that one already knows, popular with 40% of Schmitt's students. Many languages have words that are

similar in form, particularly if the languages are closely related, English 'chair' versus French 'chaise' or English 'day' versus German 'Tag'. Students often seem to avoid such cognates (Lightbown and Libben, 1984), perhaps to keep the two languages separate in their minds. Hakan Ringbom (1982) found that Finnish learners of English in fact preferred words from Swedish rather than from Finnish: 'I can play pingis' for 'table-tennis' or 'This is a very beautiful stad' for 'town'. Given the relationships between many European languages and the amount of word-borrowing that affects modern languages everywhere, there may well be some links between the L2 word and something in the second language. With 'posto' there may be few clues; there are some meanings of 'post' such as 'leave your post' which suggest a fixed location such as a seat but most of the meanings are more to do with the mail or with fence-posts. With other words a reasonable guessing strategy may nevertheless be to try to relate them to the L1, provided of course there is a relationship between the two languages—it does not work for English speakers trying to read street signs in Hungary. In the past language teachers have often put students on their guard against 'false friends'—to the neglect of 'true friends' whose resemblance is not accidental, which are utilised in methods like the New Concurrent Approach described in Chapter 11.

Strategies for Acquiring Words

It is one thing to be able to work out the meaning of a word on one occasion; it is another to remember the word so that it can be used on future occasions. Some of the strategies that learners use are:

Repetition and Rote Learning

The commonest approach is perhaps sheer practice: repeat the word again and again till you know it by heart. Typically this is done by memorising lists of words or by testing yourself repeatedly on piles of flashcards, eliminating the ones you know till none are left. However, much of this work may be in vain. Harry Bahrick (1984) has shown that the most important thing in learning a word is the first encounter; he found effects of this eight years later. Practice may not be able to make up for a disastrous first encounter.

Organising Words in the Mind

Much teaching of vocabulary implies that the effective way of learning vocabulary is to organise the words into groups in our mind. Hence we saw course-books using vocabulary sets even when Rosch's work suggests this is not the normal way of learning. *Touchstone* (McCarthy, McCarten and Sandiford, 2005) tells the students in Lesson 2 'Here are some things students take to

class' and then lists 'umbrella', 'pencil' etc, i.e. reversing Rosch's sequence by starting with a superordinate category.

Organising may consist of putting related words in a 'word web'. *Speakout* (Clare and Wilson, 2011) gets students to fill in empty bubbles in a diagram that connects 'go to' to 'a market', 'have' to an 'exhibition' and so on. Or it may mean thinking about aspects of the word form, say word endings such as '-er' or prefixes such as 'con-'. Organising words in groups by common morphology linked to meaning may be a useful way of remembering them. *Tapestry Listening and Speaking 1* (Benz and Dworak, 2000) for instance asks students to characterise nouns for professions both as '-or' (actor), '-ist' (typist), or '-ian' (musician) and then as different types of career (medical careers, entertainers, public service, and so on). The book does not, however, point out that 'driver' has now made the transition from human being to machine that many '-er' words take, such as 'computer', 'printer' and 'reader'.

Linking to Existing Knowledge

The commonest way of remembering new vocabulary is to exploit the different memory systems in our minds for linking new information to old. Learning an entirely new item may be very hard; it will be a single isolated piece of knowledge that will rapidly fade. The information that 'posto' = 'seat' soon disappears if it is not linked to our experience in one way or another. The ancient Greeks first devised memory systems to help with delivering speeches. One invention was 'loci': store information you want to remember in a carefully visualised location. You imagine a palace with many rooms; you enter the palace and turn to the left into the west wing; you go up the stairs, find a corridor and go into the third room on the left; you put your piece of information on the second bookcase on the left, second shelf up, on the left. To retrieve the information you mentally retrace your footsteps to the same point. Adaptations of the loci theory are still in use today by people who entertain with feats of memory; it is also supposed to be useful for card players.

Other ways of remembering information link what you are learning to something you already know through mental imagery. In *Tapestry 1: Listening and Speaking* (Benz and Dworak, 2000), students are told 'To remember new vocabulary words, think about a picture that reminds you of the word'. One system is to link the new vocabulary to a pre-set scheme. First you need to memorise a simple scheme for storing information; then you need to link the new information to the scheme you already know. New information is hooked in to old. The version I have used involves students memorising a short poem for the numbers from one to ten: 'One's a bun; two's a shoe; three's a tree; four's a door; five's a hive; six's sticks; seven's heaven; eight's a gate; nine's a line; ten's a hen'. Then they remember ten items by making an incongruous mental image connecting each item with a number on the list; if no 1 is an elephant, then they have to invent an

image of an elephant eating a bun or an elephant inside the bun. And so on for nine other items. Things remembered in this way can be quickly recovered from memory, even out of sequence. Elaborate schemes exist for handling more items at a time.

Or there are other ways of making the links, such as the psychology-inspired ‘mnemnotechnics’ techniques. In one, students acquire L2 words by associating them with incongruous images or sounds in the L1. The French ‘hérisson’ (hedgehog) is remembered through an image of the English sound-alike ‘hairy son’ (Gruneberg, 1987). The original keyword approach described by Atkinson (1975) suggests that, to learn the Spanish word ‘pato’ (duck), you might invent the image of a duck wearing a pot on its head. When you think of the English word ‘duck’, this brings to mind the pot-wearing duck, which in turn causes the Spanish word ‘pato’ to be produced. One consequence is the fantasy word-store created in the L2 user’s mind, inhabited by hairy sons and eccentric ducks, quite unlike the word-store of a monolingual native speaker. This complicated chain of associations may prove difficult to use in actual speech. Indeed these strategies treat a word as being paired with a single meaning and thus ignore not only all the depth of meaning of the word but also all the other aspects outlined earlier. They amount to a sophisticated form of list-learning. It may also depend on the target language having a reasonable phonological similarity to the first language, as Ernesto Macaro (2006) points out: the Polish word ‘szalenstwo’ (madness) may have little recognisable for an English speaker to cling on to.

Box 3.11 Vocabulary Strategies

- To understand an unfamiliar L2 word, people make use of a variety of strategies such as guessing, using dictionaries, deducing meaning from the word’s form and relating it to cognates.
- To acquire new L2 words, people use strategies such as repetition, organising them in the mind, and linking them to existing knowledge.

3.6. Vocabulary and Teaching

Focusing Questions

- How would you teach a new word such as ‘trombone’ to a student?
- Do you use any ‘local’ words in your first language or in your second that people from other areas don’t understand?

Box 3.12 Students on Vocabulary

Turkish: In terms of vocabulary, generally, it was the learner's responsibility to learn. But sometimes we were studying vocabulary in context in a reading passage although it was still up to the learner to memorize and use them. There were no really effective activities to help learners internalize the vocabulary.

American: Vocabulary was taught with big cards put all around the room, identifying 'chair' 'cupboard' 'door' 'blackboard' etc. But as our fluency increased, I think we mostly understood words from context and usage rather than being formally taught vocabulary.

What we have been saying impinges on teaching in four main ways.

Demonstrating Meaning

One of the central issues of language teaching is how to get the meaning of a new word across to the student. This depends on what we believe meaning to be and on the nature of the particular word. Audiovisual teaching thought that you conveyed new meaning by providing students with a picture: 'der Mann' = ♂. Traditional language teaching thought you provided it by means of a translation: 'der Mann' = 'the man'. Communicative language teaching and task-based learning provide no techniques for demonstrating meaning at all; the meaning of 'der Mann' is built up out of hearing it in different interactional contexts over time.

All these techniques assume that getting meaning is simply associating a word with a unique meaning. But a single 'word' may have many meanings; we have to pair 'man' with 'human being', with 'a piece in chess' and with the other fifteen odd meanings found in the OED (Oxford University Press, n.d.); the number of pairs between words and meanings in a language vastly exceeds the number of actual words. Many recent coursebooks, however, now sport mini-dictionaries called Photobanks (*speakout*, Clare and Wilson, 2011) and Vocabulary Reference (*English Unlimited*, Doff, 2010), based on a single lexical item linked to a full colour picture: 'a pen', 'start work', 'cheetah', 'TV presenter', etc.

If you treat words as discrete coins in this manner, you overlook the many aspects of meaning they share, such as the 'animate' feature 'man' shares with large numbers of nouns, and the many relationships they have with other words such as the connections among 'man', 'woman' and 'boy', and the other aspects of meaning discussed above such as collocations like 'a man-to-man talk'. The links between 'der Mann' and ♂ or 'man' are only the first stage in getting the word. My *People and Places* (Cook, 1980) tried to teach meaning by getting the students to use the word actively almost immediately; just after hearing 'beautiful' for the first time, the students had to decide whether

Paul Newman, Barbra Streisand and Stan Laurel are beautiful. (Before readers object that 'beautiful' refers only to women, I heard Joanne Woodward, Paul Newman's wife, call him beautiful in a TV interview).

Teaching the Complexity of Words

L2 learning of vocabulary is not just learning a word once and for all but learning the range of information that goes with it. It is unlikely that everything about a word is learnt simultaneously; we might not know its spelling; we might be missing some of the components of its meaning; we certainly will not know all the word combinations in which it can occur. The problems associated with going from the first language to the second are not just the transfer of the actual words but also the relationships and overtones they carry in the L1. As an English speaker, I cannot conceive how 'postpone' and 'reject' could be the same word in another language, as they are in Hebrew 'lidchot' (Levenston, 1979). Most uses of vocabulary in textbooks imply that words have single meanings: books that have vocabulary lists usually give single word translations. The Italian course *Italian Now* (Danesi, 2012), for instance, lists one translation for 'bank' ('banca') and one for 'write' ('scrivere'), where many might be necessary.

An aspect of vocabulary that has become important in recent years is how the word fits in to the structure of the sentence. Partly this is the argument structure of the verb described earlier, which for example forces the verb 'faint' to have a grammatical subject 'Martin fainted' but never an object 'Martin fainted John'. Argument structure requires the verb 'meet' to have an object: 'He met John', not 'He met'. In addition some verbs are followed by subordinate clauses 'I hoped Mary would go' rather than grammatical objects 'I hoped Mary'. A speaker of English knows not only what a word means and how it is pronounced, but also how it fits into sentences.

Teaching cannot ignore that the student has to learn not just the meaning and pronunciation of each word, but crucially how to use it. One simple way of doing this is the traditional task of getting the students to make up sentences using particular words. For example, in *Just Right* (Harmer, 2004), students have to say which words in a word list, 'absolutely . . . pirate . . . water tank', they already know and then 'Write some sentences using them'.

Words are multi-facetted; we don't know a word properly until we have learnt its forms, its different types of meaning and the ways in which it is used in sentences. Vocabulary teaching has been diminished by being considered the provision of a list of separate items each with a specific meaning. Instead it is building up the richness of vocabulary networks of meaning in the students' minds.

Fitting in with Students' Strategies

The second major implication is how teaching can fit in with the students' ways of learning vocabulary. For example teachers implicitly draw on many of the strategies we have just outlined when they introduce new vocabulary.

Showing a picture of a train may allow the students to guess what 'train' means from the context. Miming the action of flying may demonstrate the meaning of 'fly'. The teacher's attempts to explain a word through examples or definitions is similar to providing a human dictionary. Getting the students to sort vocabulary into sets relies on the strategy for organising things in their minds.

Finally as usual there is the issue, not of what vocabulary the learner should be acquiring, but *whose* vocabulary? If students want to be like native speakers, we have to define *which* native speakers. Vocabulary differs from one country to another; what North Americans call an 'elevator' is a 'lift' to the rest of the world; Indian speakers use 'peon' to mean an office clerk, where English people mean a kind of peasant, and 'flower bed' where others would say 'marriage bed'. Vocabulary varies from region to region within a country; an alley way is a 'chare' in Newcastle, a 'folley' in Colchester, and a 'lane' in the Isle of Wight; 'gravy' seems to be made with milk in Texas and with meat juice in the rest of the US. Even if the variation in vocabulary is not extensive, language teaching still has to consider which native speaker is most appropriate.

But what if the student's aim is not to be a native speaker but an efficient user of English as a second language—an L2 user? The words they need may be those that are understood by fellow L2 users, not by native speakers. Much of the Far East seems to use 'cider' for any fizzy drink rather than one made of apple; perhaps it is more useful for the student to acquire the general term rather than the specifically native usage. Some things we have hitherto considered mistakes may in fact be useful—if other L2 users all make the same 'mistake'. For example I have spent a lifetime querying students who claim 'I was very interesting in the class' by pointing out that this means something quite different from 'I was very interested in the class'. Perhaps I have been wasting my time: if all the L2 users know perfectly well what they mean by 'interesting', what I understand by it is beside the point, unless they want to communicate with me and my fellow natives rather than each other.

Box 3.13 Vocabulary and Teaching

- teach the complexity of words
- fit in with the students' strategies
- teach basic level words first
- teach lexical relationships
- think about the *first* presentation of the word
- teach some words through components of meaning
- remember it is how the word is practised, not how often, that is important
- remember students transfer L1 meanings as well as the words themselves
- put words in their structural context

Discussion Topics

- 1 Take a lesson or a page from the textbook you are most familiar with: what new words are taught and how?
- 2 What strategies would you now encourage your students to use to learn vocabulary?
- 3 To what extent can we learn the words of another language without learning a new way of thinking to go with them?
- 4 How useful are dictionaries for students?
- 5 Decide how you would teach a beginners' class these high frequency words:

Nouns: time, people, way, year, government, day, man, world, work, life

Verbs: say, know, get, go, see, make, think, take, come, use

Adjectives: new, good, old, different, local, small, great, social, important, national

Further Reading

An interesting book with many exercises for vocabulary teaching is Lewis (1993) *The Lexical Approach*. Useful books on vocabulary are: Nation (2013) *Learning Vocabulary in Another Language*, Cohen (1990) *Language Learning*, and Singleton (1999) *Exploring the Second Language Mental Lexicon*. Ideas about language and thinking can be found in Cook and Bassetti (eds.) (2011) *Language and Bilingual Cognition*.

Box 3.14 Answers to ‘Test How Many Words You Know’ in Box 3.5

Numbers refer to frequency bands in the BNC (0–2000 *level* means the word occurs in the most frequent 2000 words of the language).

- | | | |
|--|--------------------------|-----------------|
| A a round object often used as a toy is a ball | <input type="checkbox"/> | } 0–2000 level |
| B something you carry and put things in is a bag | <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| C a pipe or channel through which things flow is a conduit | <input type="checkbox"/> | } up to 10,000 |
| D to give way to someone is to yield | <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| E a person who works without being paid is a volunteer | <input type="checkbox"/> | } up to 20,000 |
| F a preparation for preventing infectious disease is a vaccine | <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| G a heavy glass with a handle is known as a tumbler | <input type="checkbox"/> | } up to 50,000 |
| H a type of brain chemical is serotonin | <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| I a sailor’s word for a clumsy fellow is a lubber | <input type="checkbox"/> | } up to 100,000 |
| J the effects of wind, rain etc on objects is weathering | <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| K a heavy wheel used to store power is a flywheel | <input type="checkbox"/> | } up to 150,000 |
| L something engraved on stone is lapidary | <input type="checkbox"/> | |

You can now see roughly how many words you know by taking the last level at which you score both words right as your maximum. A full version of this test is on the website *Words* (available at <http://www.viviancook.uk/SLLandLT/SLL<5thed.html>).

Box 3.15 German Word Test

In German what is the word for:

- | | | |
|---------------------|---------------|----------------------|
| 1 ☞ | 2 ✋ | 3 ✍ |
| 4 ↑ | 5 ➔ | 6 scissors |
| 7 telephone | 8 key | 9 television |
| 10 yacht | | |

How Did You Try to Learn The Words Tested in Box 3.15?

Tick the strategies you used.

- 1 linking L2 sounds to sounds of the L1 word
- 2 looking at the meaning of part of the word
- 3 noting the structure of part of the word
- 4 putting the word in a topic group
- 5 visualising the word in isolation
- 6 linking the word to a situation
- 7 creating a mental image of the word
- 8 associating a physical sensation with the word
- 9 associating the word with a keyword

Check your answers against page 76.

Key Terms about Vocabulary

argument structure: is the aspect of a word that dictates the structures in which it may be used, for example the verb 'give' requires an animate subject, a direct object and an indirect object: 'Peter gave a stone to the wolf'.

cognates: are words that have similar or identical forms in different languages, due to historical connections, such as 'subject' (English)/'sujet' (French) and 'medicine' (English)/ 'Medizin' (German). This does not mean that they necessarily have the same meaning: 'prune' in French means a plum, in English only a 'dried plum'.

collocations: are sets of words that often go with one another. 'Bread' is likely to occur with 'butter', 'stormy' with 'weather' and so on.


components of meaning: are general aspects of meaning which are shared by many words; 'boy' has the components 'male', 'human', 'juvenile' etc. 'Woman' has the components of 'female', 'human', 'adult' etc.

false friends: are words that look more or less the same in two languages but have different meanings: French ‘coin’ looks just like English ‘coin’ but means ‘corner’.

lexical entry: a lexical item has a lexical entry in the mental lexicon that gives all the information about it, such as its pronunciation, meaning, and how it may be used in the structure of the sentence (e.g. ‘man’: /mæn/, <man>, Noun, countable, +animate, pl. /men/ <men> . . .).

lexical items: are single words or phrases of more than one word that need to have a lexical entry in the lexicon as they have a unique meaning: ‘go’, ‘go through’, ‘go on’, ‘go on a spree’ are all lexical items consisting of one or more words.

prototype theory: words have whole meanings divided into basic level (‘car’), subordinate level (‘Ford’) and superordinate level (‘vehicle’).

reference: is one kind of meaning in which a word or lexical item connects an aspect of the world to a concept in the mind: ‘dog’ refers to .

semantic features: some aspects of meaning can be ‘decomposed’ into semantic features: ‘boy’ means (+male), (+human), (–adult), while ‘ewe’ means (–male), (–human) (+adult), etc.

word: the best definition for ‘word’ in English (but not in Chinese) is the letters between two spaces, i.e. it defines the written word. In speech it is hard to pin down except to say that words can potentially have pauses after them. ‘Word’ is a convenient unit for analysing vocabulary and syntax but often needs to be specified more closely as ‘lexical item’ etc.

word frequency: measured by counting how often a word or word form occurs in a large sample of spoken or written language such as the British National Corpus (BNC) (<http://www.natcorp.ox.ac.uk/>), Corpus of Contemporary American (COCA) (<http://corpus.byu.edu/coca/>) or Ngram Viewer (<https://books.google.com/ngrams>).

4 Acquiring and Teaching Pronunciation

Focusing Questions

Think of a speech sound in your first language:

- How do you think you make it?
- How do you think an L2 student learns it?
- How would you teach it to an L2 student?

Keywords

See glossary at chapter end for phonetics terms.

Language conveys meanings from one person to another through spoken sounds, written letters or gestures. Speakers know how to pronounce the words, sentences and utterances of their native language. At one level they can tell the difference in pronunciation between 'drain' and 'train', the sound patterns of the language; at another they know the difference between 'Fine', 'Fine?' and 'Fine!', the intonation patterns in which the voice rises and falls. The phonologies of languages differ in terms of how they use sounds and intonation patterns, hard as this may be for many students to appreciate and difficult as it may be for teachers to teach. It is impossible to imagine a non-disabled speaker of a language who could not pronounce sentences in it.

Box 4.1 An American Student on Pronunciation

Polish pronunciation was the most difficult for me. Its consonant clusters caused many headaches and laughs. It is a very transparent language, though, so the key was studying the alphabet. Once I was able to match sounds to letters, I became more fluid and confident.

Talking about the sounds of language necessitates some way of writing down the sounds without reference to ordinary written language. For over a century the solution for researchers and teachers in much of the world has been the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA), which supplies symbols for all the sounds that could occur in human languages. The full version is given in many books and the latest official revision can be downloaded from the International Phonetic Association (<https://www.internationalphoneticassociation.org/content/full-ipa-chart>); there is also an online version at UCLA that demonstrates how the sounds are pronounced (<http://hctv.humnet.ucla.edu/departments/linguistics/VowelsandConsonants/course/chapter1/chapter1.html>). A phonetic alphabet then provides a way of showing the sheer sounds of language, known as phonetics.

However any particular language only uses a small selection of these sounds for its sound system, its phonology. So the version of IPA normally encountered in teaching is the one used for transcribing a particular language, for instance the phonemes of English, included somewhere in most coursebooks. This is different from a transcript that records sheer phonetic sounds, independently of the language involved, and so uses the full IPA chart; usually this type of transcript is put in square brackets, for example [desk]. A transcript of the significant sounds in the phonological systems of a particular language is usually given in slant brackets, say English /desk/.

Opening Activity

Carry out the following test. Note: it only covers the consonants of English as the vowels are more complicated to test and have far more variations from one native speaker to another.

Box 4.2 The Instant Accent Test for English Consonants

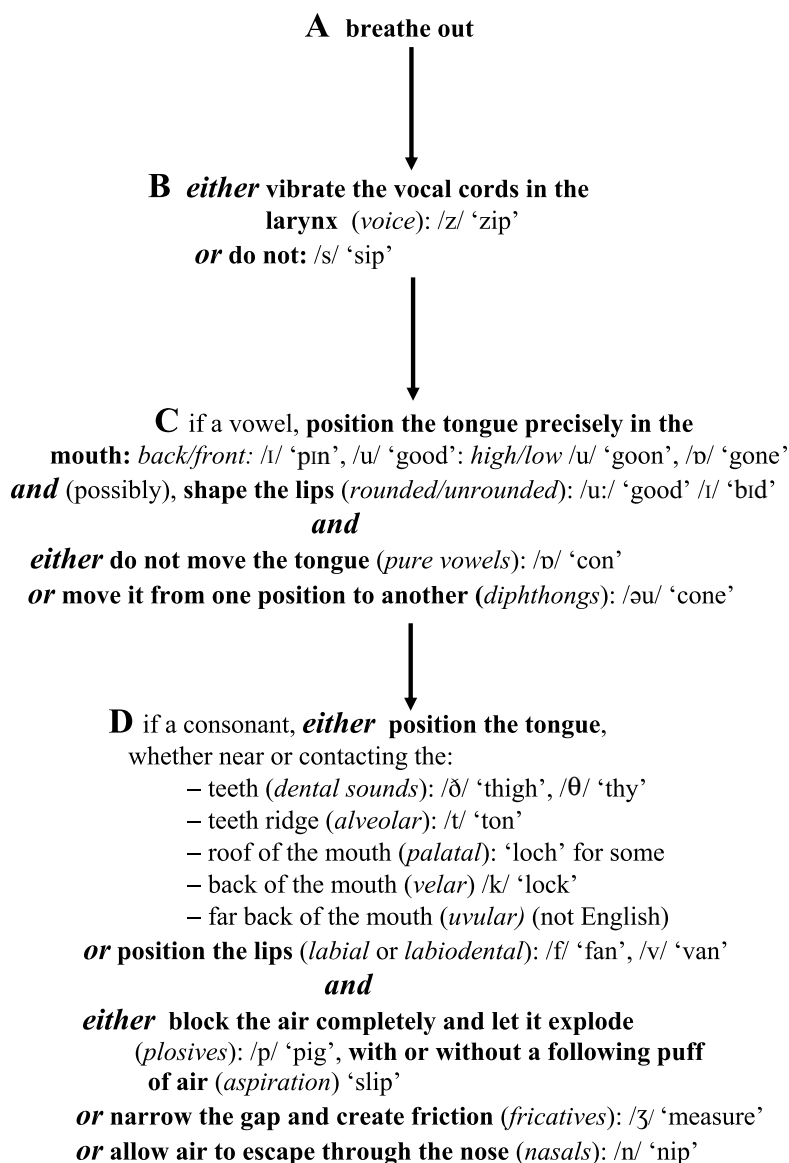
A one-page printable version of this is on the website (<http://homepage.ntlworld.com/vivian.c/SLA/CooksPhontest.htm>).

Find a non-native speaker of English and get them to read the following words aloud rapidly. Point to words at random rather than in sequence. Score each selected consonant as: (1) native-like accent, (2) comprehensible but not fully native, (3) non-native pronunciation. Note any peculiarities on the right. Do *not* pay attention to vowels.

phoneme	allophones				
	initial	middle	final	cluster (CC) etc	misc
1 /p/	pin	<input type="checkbox"/> supper	<input type="checkbox"/> map	<input type="checkbox"/> spit	<input type="checkbox"/>
2 /b/	bin	<input type="checkbox"/> suburb	<input type="checkbox"/> rub	<input type="checkbox"/> bleed	<input type="checkbox"/>
3 /t/	tip	<input type="checkbox"/> bitter	<input type="checkbox"/> pet (often glottal stop /?/ in UK)	<input type="checkbox"/> sting	<input type="checkbox"/>
4 /d/	doll	<input type="checkbox"/> rudder	<input type="checkbox"/> fed	<input type="checkbox"/> drain	<input type="checkbox"/>
5 /k/	cash	<input type="checkbox"/> tucker	<input type="checkbox"/> luck	<input type="checkbox"/> create	<input type="checkbox"/>
6 /g/	goat	<input type="checkbox"/> bigger	<input type="checkbox"/> mug	<input type="checkbox"/> glade	<input type="checkbox"/>
7 /tʃ/	chew	<input type="checkbox"/> Richard	<input type="checkbox"/> rich	<input type="checkbox"/>
8 /dʒ/	joke	<input type="checkbox"/> badger	<input type="checkbox"/> edge	<input type="checkbox"/>
9 /f/	fast	<input type="checkbox"/> differ	<input type="checkbox"/> off	<input type="checkbox"/> flame	<input type="checkbox"/>
10 /v/	view	<input type="checkbox"/> river	<input type="checkbox"/> of	<input type="checkbox"/>
11 /θ/	thigh	<input type="checkbox"/> rethink	<input type="checkbox"/> bath	<input type="checkbox"/> three	<input type="checkbox"/>
12 /ð/	then	<input type="checkbox"/> rather	<input type="checkbox"/> bathe	<input type="checkbox"/>
13 /s/	soon	<input type="checkbox"/> lesson	<input type="checkbox"/> mess	<input type="checkbox"/> strain	<input type="checkbox"/>
14 /z/	zoom	<input type="checkbox"/> razor	<input type="checkbox"/> was	<input type="checkbox"/> sizzle	<input type="checkbox"/>
15 /ʃ/	show	<input type="checkbox"/> usher	<input type="checkbox"/> fish	<input type="checkbox"/> shrew	<input type="checkbox"/>
16 /ʒ/	genre	<input type="checkbox"/> measure	<input type="checkbox"/> rouge	<input type="checkbox"/>
17 /h/	who	<input type="checkbox"/> —	<input type="checkbox"/> —	<input type="checkbox"/>
18 /l/	lip	<input type="checkbox"/> pillar	<input type="checkbox"/> hill	<input type="checkbox"/> plain	<input type="checkbox"/>
19 /r/	read	<input type="checkbox"/> direct	<input type="checkbox"/> far (ø) (silent in RP)	<input type="checkbox"/> there is (linking /r/ in RP)	<input type="checkbox"/>
20 /m/	mix	<input type="checkbox"/> summer	<input type="checkbox"/> aim	<input type="checkbox"/> dims	<input type="checkbox"/>
21 /n/	nod	<input type="checkbox"/> dinner	<input type="checkbox"/> sin	<input type="checkbox"/> likes	<input type="checkbox"/>
22 /ŋ/	—	<input type="checkbox"/> banger	<input type="checkbox"/> sang	<input type="checkbox"/> finger (/ŋg/ in some of UK)	<input type="checkbox"/>
23 /j/	yes	<input type="checkbox"/> reunite	<input type="checkbox"/> —	<input type="checkbox"/> student	<input type="checkbox"/>
24 /w/	wet	<input type="checkbox"/> dissuade	<input type="checkbox"/> —	<input type="checkbox"/> saw it (linking /r/ in some of UK)	<input type="checkbox"/>

What does this test tell you about: (a) the person's first language, (b) the person's first writing system?

The starting point about pronunciation is the obvious fact that it is a physical activity as much as it is a mental one. Speaking means coordinating a number of muscular processes ranging from breathing to rounding your lips. The control of most of this is not conscious—few of us are aware of our tongue



Adapted from Cook (1997)

Figure 4.1 A quick guide how to make English speech sounds.

position when we say 'ooh' or what we have to do to make a stop consonant like /p/. The science that studies these physical aspects of speech is called articulatory phonetics and we cannot really go into the extremely technical process involved in speech here. Figure 4.1, based on Cook (1997), however,

provides a quick digest of the salient processes in producing speech, illustrated by examples from English whenever possible. Ultimately speaking another language comes down to control of all these.

4.1. Phonemes and Second Language Acquisition

Focusing Questions

- What do you think are the crucial sounds in your first language?
- How do you think you learnt them?

In traditional phonological theories of the twentieth century, each language uses a certain number of sounds called ‘phonemes’ that distinguish words and morphemes from one other. The spoken word ‘sin’ is different from the word ‘tin’ because one has the consonant phoneme /s/, the other the phoneme /t/; ‘sin’ differs from ‘son’ in that one has the vowel phoneme /ɪ/, the other the phoneme /ʌ/. And so on for all the words of the language—‘bin’, ‘kin’, ‘din’, ‘gin’, ‘soon’, ‘sawn’, ‘seen’, . . . Phonemes signal the differences between words that make a difference to meaning: the spoken distance between ‘I adore you’ and ‘I abhor you’ is a single phoneme, /d/ versus /b/.

A phoneme is a sound which is conventionally used to distinguish words with different meanings in a particular language. Any language only uses a small proportion of all the sounds available to human languages as phonemes; English does not have the /x/ phoneme heard in German words like ‘Buch’ or the click sounds used in South African languages (you can hear clicks in Xhosa songs by Miriam Makeba at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2Mwh9z58iAU>); Japanese does not have different phonemes for the /l/ in ‘lip’ and the /r/ in ‘rip’ nor does French recognise a distinction between short /ɪ/ in ‘bin’ and long /i:/ in ‘been’. Human languages have between 11 and 141 phonemes, English being about average with 44 or so (depending on accent). A list of English phonemes is given in the glossary under ‘phoneme’.

As well as phonemes, there are allophones—variant pronunciations for a phoneme in different situations, which do *not* affect the meaning. For instance in English the phoneme /l/ has three main allophones. At the beginning of a word such as ‘leaf’, it is a so-called ‘clear’ [l], sounding more like a front high vowel. At the end of a word such as ‘feel’, it can be pronounced as a ‘dark’ [ɫ], sounding lower and more like a back low vowel. Other varieties of English such as Irish English only have clear /l/. No-one will misunderstand you if you pronounce ‘leaf’ with a dark [ɫ] rather than a clear [l] but it certainly conveys a particular accent. For many Southern British speakers there is a third variety: final /l/ is nowadays often pronounced as /w/, i.e. ‘tell’ is pronounced /tew/, a phenomenon called vocalisation, i.e. turning a consonant into a vowel.

The problem for second language acquisition is that each language has its own set of phonemes and allophones. Two phonemes in one language may correspond to two allophones of the same phoneme in another language, or may not exist at all: the two Polish phonemes that distinguish ‘prosie’ (pig)

from 'prosze' (please) sound like allophones of /ʃ/ (ship) to an English ear while the two English phonemes /θ/ (thigh) and /ð/ (thy) seem to be allophones of one phoneme to a Spanish speaker.

In the early days of the Direct Method of language teaching, phonetic scripts were often used directly for language teaching; people would read aloud texts in IPA, apparently common in China to this day. Phonetic script is still commonly used at advanced levels where people are often taught 'ear-training' by transcribing spoken language. Mostly EFL coursebooks treat a phonetic script as a resource to be consulted from time to time rather than as the main vehicle for teaching; IPA charts for English can be seen pinned up in many classrooms. The starter coursebook *speakout* (Eales and Oakes, 2012) has a chart of the symbols for English on its inside front cover but uses them sparingly in the book. Joanne Kenworthy's *The Pronunciation of English: A Workbook* (2000), intended more for teachers than students, uses phonetic symbols to train the listener to locate and discuss phonemes in authentic English speech.

Over the years the concept of the phoneme has proved useful in organising materials for teaching pronunciation, even when it has been largely superseded in much phonological research. Pronunciation textbooks like *Ship or Sheep?* (Baker, 1981) present the student with pairs of words: 'car' /ka:/ versus 'cow' /kav/ or 'bra' /bra:/ versus 'brow' /brav/. This technique originated from the 'minimal pairs' technique used by linguists to establish the phonemes of a language from scratch; you present the native speaker with a series of likely or unlikely pairs of words and ask them whether they are different. This allows you in principle to build up the whole phoneme inventory—in practice it is very hard to do as I discovered when I naïvely tried to demonstrate it in a lecture with a native speaker of a language I didn't know (Russian).

In typical pronunciation materials the student learns how to distinguish one phoneme from another by hearing and repeating sentences with a high concentration of particular phonemes such as 'I've found a mouse in the house' or 'This is the cleanest house in town', or traditional tongue-twisters such as 'He ran from the Indies to the Andes in his undies'. Like the teaching of structural grammar, this activity emphasises practice rather than communication and sees pronunciation as a set of habits for producing sounds. The habit of producing the sound /n/ is believed to be acquired by repeating it over and over again and by being corrected when it is said wrongly. Learning to pronounce a second language means building up new pronunciation habits and overcoming the bias of the first language. Only by saying 'car' /ka:/ and 'cow' /kav/ many times is the contrast between /a:/ and /av/ acquired. While in other areas of language teaching such as grammar people would scorn making students simply repeat sentences, it nevertheless remains a popular technique for pronunciation teaching.

Phoneme Learning

Traditionally much research into the L2 acquisition of phonology has focussed on the phoneme. A classic example is the work of Wilfried Wieden and William Nemser (1991) who looked at phonemes and features in the acquisition

of English by Austrian school children. They found that some phonemes improved gradually over time while others showed no improvement. Beginners for example perceived the diphthong /əʊ/ in 'boat' only 55% correctly but managed 100% after eight years; the sound /ə/ at the end of 'finger', however, gave students as much trouble after eight years as it did at the start. The learners went through three stages:

- 1 *Presystemic*. At this stage learners learn the sounds in individual words but without any overall pattern, i.e. they may learn the /əʊ/ in 'no' but not the /əʊ/ in 'coat'.
- 2 *Transfer*. Now the learners start to treat the second language sounds systematically as equivalent to the sounds of their first language, i.e. they see the second language sounds through the lens of the first.
- 3 *Approximative*. Finally the learners realise their native sounds are not good enough and attempt to restructure the L2 sounds in a new system; they realise that the sounds are not just variants of their native sounds.

This example shows the important role of transfer from one language to another in acquiring pronunciation. It is not, however, a matter of just transferring a single phoneme from the first language to the second but of carrying over general properties of the first language. The phonemes of the language do not exist as individual items but are part of a whole system of contrasts. Practising a single phoneme or pair of phonemes may not tackle the underlying issue. Though some of the learners' pronunciation rules are related to their first language, they nevertheless still make up a unique temporary system—an interlanguage.

Learning below the Phoneme Level

For many purposes the phoneme cannot give the whole picture of pronunciation. As well as the allophone mentioned above, the elements which make up a phoneme also need to be taken into account. Seemingly different phonemes share common features which will present a learning problem that stretches across several phonemes.

Let us take the example of voice onset time (VOT), which has been extensively researched in SLA research. One of the differences between pairs of plosive consonants such as /t~d/ and /k~g/ is the VOT—the interval of time between the consonant and the following vowel. The voicing of the vowel can start more or less at the same moment as the release of the obstruction by the tongue or the lips; this will then sound like a voiced /b/ 'boss' or /g/ 'go'. Or voicing can start a few milliseconds *after* the release of the plosive, yielding voiceless /p/ 'pod', /k/ 'cod'. The difference between voiced and voiceless plosives is not a matter of *whether* voicing occurs but *when* it occurs, i.e. of timing relative to the moment of release. The distinction between voiced and voiceless plosives is a matter of convention rather than absolute. Hence it varies from one language to another: the Spanish /k~g/ contrast is not exactly

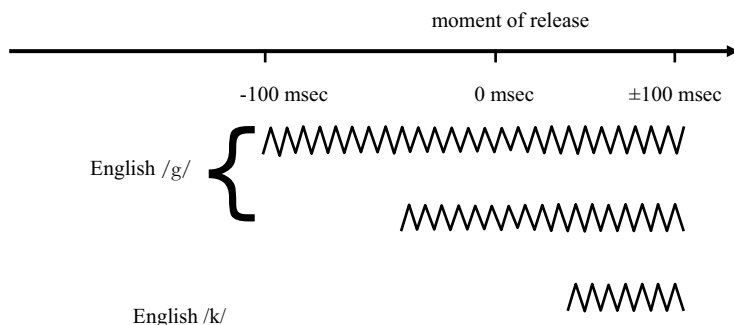


Figure 4.2 Voice onset time (VOT) in English stops /k/ and /g/.

the same as the English /k~g/ because English /k/ has VOT that starts at +80 milliseconds but Spanish /k/ has VOT of only +29 mills, almost overlapping with the English /g/. This is shown in Figure 4.2.

One interesting question is whether there are two separate systems to handle the two languages or one system that covers both. French learners of English, for example, pronounce the /t/ sound in French with a longer VOT than monolinguals (Flege, 1987). Spanish/English bilinguals use more or less the same VOT in both English and Spanish (Williams, 1977). It makes no difference to their perception of stops which language is used. As Watson (1991, p. 44) sums up, 'In both production and perception, therefore, studies of older children (and adults) suggest that bilinguals behave in ways that are at once distinct from monolinguals and very similar to them.' L2 users are not imitation native speakers but something unique—people who simultaneously possess two languages. We should not expect them to be like natives—L2 users with multi-competence, not imitation native speakers with monolingual competence.

Many theories of phonology see the phoneme as built up of a number of distinctive features. The English /p~b/ contrast is made up of features such as:

- *fortis/lenis*: /p/ is a fortis consonant, said with extra energy, like /k~t/, while /b/ is a lenis consonant, said with less energy, like /g~d/.
- *voice*: /p/ is a voiceless consonant in which the vocal cords do not vibrate, like /t~k/, while /b/ is a voiced consonant during which the vocal cords vibrate, like /g~d/.
- *aspiration*: /p/ is aspirated (i.e. has a long VOT), like /t/, while /b/ is unaspirated, like /d/.

And other features as well.

These distinctive features do not belong just to these six phonemes but potentially to all phonemes; other voiced consonants for instance include /f/ 'ship' and /m/ 'mouth'; other fortis consonants include /k/ and /f/. All the differences between phonemes can be reduced to about nineteen distinctive

features, though no two lists seems to agree—aspiration is not usually on the list. Getting the distinctive features right or wrong can then affect not just one phoneme but many; producing the right voicing contrast affects /ʃ/ ‘shirt’, /dʒ/ ‘job’, /p/ ‘pie’ and many others. The danger again is that in some languages a distinctive feature may be crucial to a phonemic difference, in others it may contribute to an allophone; the difference between English aspirated /p/ ‘pot’ and unaspirated /p/ ‘stop’ is allophonic and depends on position in the word. In Hindi, however, aspiration is phonemic and /pʰəl/ (fruit) and /pəl/ (moment) are different words, one with, one without aspiration.

The characteristics of a foreign accent often reside in these distinctive features. In German for example tenseness is important for consonant pairs like /t~d/, not voice; it is hardly surprising that German speakers have problems with all the voiced and voiceless consonants in English, /t~d, θ~ð, s~z/ and so on, not just with individual phonemes or pairs of phonemes. It is often the feature that gives trouble, not the individual phoneme, in other words a whole group of phonemes that share the same feature. The Speech Accent Archive at George Mason University details the typical pronunciations of many accents of English, both native and non-native, as we see in the box.

Box 4.3 Characteristics of Speakers of Different L1s Using English

German: devoicing of final voiced plosives: /bɪk/ for /bɪg/ ‘big’

Japanese: use of /l/ for /r/: /led/ ‘lead’~ /red/ ‘red’

Arabic: devoicing final voiced consonants: /spuːns/ for /spuːnz/ ‘spoons’

Chinese (Mandarin): use of /v/ for /w/: /vɪð/ for /wɪð/ ‘with’

Spanish: adding vowels: /esneik/ for /sneik/ ‘snake’

Italian: vowel shortening: /plɪz/ for /pliːz/ ‘please’

Hindi: use of /b/ for /w/: /biː/ for /wiː/ ‘we’

Hungarian: devoicing final consonants: /faɪf/ for /faiv/ ‘five’

Fante: velar fricative /h/: /xə/ for /hə/ ‘her’

Finnish: vowel raising: /æsk/ for /ɑːsk/ ‘ask’

Examples derived from the Speech Accent Archive

However useful phonemes may be for organising teaching, they do not in themselves have much to do with learning pronunciation. The phoneme is not an entity in itself but an abstract way of bundling together several aspects of pronunciation. The phonemes of a language are made up of distinctive features. Learning another language means acquiring not just each phoneme as

a whole but the crucial features. Minimal pairs like ‘din/tin’ are deceptive in that there are often several differences between the two members of the pair, each of which may pose a separate learning problem for the student.

Box 4.4 Phonemes and Distinctive Features

- Much learning of pronunciation depends on aspects other than the ‘phoneme’, for example distinctive features.
- L2 learners gradually acquire the L2 way of voicing stop consonants.
- L2 learners’ first language is affected by their knowledge of the second language, as well as their second being affected by their first.

4.2. Learning Syllable Structure

Focusing Questions

- How many syllables are there in ‘constitution’? in ‘fire’? in ‘autosegmentalism’?
- How do you think syllables work in your own speech?

In the last chapter we saw how elements of language such as morphemes build up into sentences through phrases and structures. The same is true of phonology: phonemes are part of the phonological structure of the sentence, not just items strung together like beads on a necklace. In particular they form part of the structure of syllables.

One way of analysing syllables is in terms of consonants (C) such as /t/, /s/, /p/ and so on, and vowels (V) such as /i/ or /ai/. The simplest syllable consists of a vowel V /ai/ ‘eye’, found in all languages. In English, all syllables must have a vowel, with the occasional exception of syllabic /n/ in /bʌt̩n/ (‘button’) and /l/ in /bɒt̩l/ (‘bottle’)—the vertical line beneath /n/ (‘button’) and /l/ shows they are acting as syllables.

Another type of syllable combines a single consonant with a vowel, CV as in /tai/ ‘tie’. In languages such as Japanese all syllables have this CV structure with few exceptions, hence the familiar-looking pattern of Japanese words such as ‘Miyazaki’, ‘Toyota’ or ‘Yokohama’.

A third syllable structure allows combinations of CVC as in /tait/ ‘tight’. CVC languages vary in how many consonants can come at the beginning or end of the syllable. Chinese allows only one of each, again resulting in familiar-looking names like ‘Chan’ and ‘Wong’.

One difficulty for the L2 learner comes from how the consonants combine with each other to make CC or CCV—the permissible consonant clusters. English combines /p/ with /l/ in ‘plan’ /plæn/ and with /r/ in ‘pray’ /preɪ/ but does not combine /p/ with /f/ or /z/; there are no English words like ‘pfan’ or ‘pzan’. In German, however, initial /ps/ and /pn/ are possible combinations, as

in 'Psychologie' ('psychology') and 'Pneu' ('tyre'). Aliens in Larry Niven science fiction stories can be identified because their names have non-English clusters—'tnuctipun' /tn/ and 'ptavvs' /vv/. English does not allow 'tn' at the beginning of a word and doubles <v> in only a handful of words such as 'skivvy'.

The compulsory vowel in the English syllable can be preceded or followed by one or more consonants. So 'lie' /lai/ which has a consonant/vowel (CV) structure, and 'sly' /slai/ which starts with a two-consonant cluster /sl/ (CC), are both possible, as are 'eel' /i:l/ with VC and 'eels' /i:lz/ with VCC. Longer clusters of three or four consonants can also occur: the four at the end of 'lengths' /lɛŋkθs/ or the three at the beginning of 'splinter' /splɪntə/. The maximum seems to be the five final consonants in the /ɪmpfst/ of 'Thou triumphst!'. The syllable structure of some languages allows only a single consonant before or after the vowel. Japanese, for instance, has no consonant clusters and most syllables end in a vowel, i.e. it has a bare CV syllable structure; the English word 'strike' starting with CCC becomes 'sutoraki' in Japanese to conform to with the syllable structure of the language.

L2 learners often try by one means or another to make English clusters fit their first languages. Examples are Koreans saying /kəla:s/ for 'class', and Arabs saying /bəlæstɪk/ for 'plastic'. They are inserting extra vowels to make English conform to Korean or Arabic, a process known as 'epenthesis'. So British Indian children in Yorkshire pronounce 'blue' as /bəlu:/ not /blu:/, 'friend' as /fərend/ not /frend/, and 'sphere' as /səfiə/ not /sfɪə—all with epenthetic vowels (Verma, Firth and Corrigan, 1992).

An alternative strategy is to leave consonants out of words if they are not allowed in the L1—the process of 'simplification'. Cantonese speakers, whose L1 syllables have no final consonants, turn English 'girl' /gɜ:l/ into 'gir' /gɜ:/ and 'Joan' /dʒəʊn/ into 'Joa' /dʒəʊ/. Arabic syllables too can be CV but not CCV, i.e. there are no two-consonant clusters. 'Straw' /strɔ:/ is an impossible syllable in Arabic because it starts with a three-consonant cluster /str/ CCC. Indian children in Yorkshire too simplify the /nd/ of 'thousand' and the /dz/ of 'Leeds' to /d/ (Verma, Firth and Corrigan, 1992).

Egyptian-Arabic learners of English often add an epenthetic vowel /ə/ to avoid two- or three-consonant clusters. 'Children' /tʃɪldrən/ becomes 'childiren' /tʃɪldɪrən/ in their speech because the CC combination /dr/ is not allowed. 'Translate' /trænzleɪt/ comes out as 'tɪransɪlate' /tɪrænzɪleɪt/ to avoid the two-consonant CC sequences /tr/ and /sl/. Part of their first language system is being transferred into English.

So the clash between the syllable structures of the first and second languages is resolved by the expedient of adding vowels or leaving out consonants, a true interlanguage solution. It is not just the phonemes in the sentence that matter but the abstract syllable structure that governs their combination. Indeed some phonologists regard the syllable as the main unit in speaking or listening rather than the phoneme, one reason being that the sheer number of phonemes per second is too many for the brain to process and so some other unit must be involved.

Box 4.5 Syllables

- A crucial aspect of language acquisition is the mastery of syllable structure.
- Learners often try to make their second language syllable structure fit the structure of their first language by adding or omitting vowels and consonants.

4.3. General Ideas about Pronunciation Learning**Focusing Questions**

- Do you think your own accent gives away where you come from in your L1? In your L2?
- How important do you think the first language is in learning L2 pronunciation?

Keywords

transfer: carrying over elements of one language one knows to another, whether L1 to L2 or L2 to L1 (reverse transfer)—or indeed L3, L4 . . .

accent versus **dialect:** an accent is a way of pronouncing a language that is typical of a particular group, whether regional or social; a dialect is the whole system characteristic of a particular group including grammar and vocabulary etc as well as pronunciation.

Box 4.6 A Chinese Student on Pronunciation

One of the most significant ways for me to learn pronunciation is the IPA. IPA always enables me to correct the mistakes in pronouncing a word when sometimes even my teachers pronounced it wrong. Another way is listening to BBC or VOA. Such authorized channels not only correct my pronunciation of a word, but also can provide me a correct intonation of conversations. Last but not least, always be careful to learn pronunciation and intonation when I speak to a native English speaker. And last of all, practice.

Let us now look at some general issues about the learning of L2 pronunciation.

L1 and Transfer

Usually it is very easy to spot the first language of a non-native speaker from their accent; German speakers of English tend to say ‘zing’ when they mean ‘thing’, Japanese ‘pray’ when they mean ‘play’. Chapter 8 asks whether this

matters: we can after all instantly tell whether a native speaker of English comes from Texas, Glasgow or Sydney but this does not mean their accents are wrong. In the second language very few people manage to acquire an accent that can pass for native; at best L2 users have boasted to me of being mistaken for a native speaker of some variety other than that of the person they're talking to; i.e. a Swedish speaker of English might be taken to be an American in England. Foreign accent is all but ineradicable—but then so are many local accents of English.

The components of foreign accent may be at different levels of phonology. The most salient may be the apparent use of the wrong phoneme. I ordered 'bière' (beer) in France and was surprised when the waiter brought me 'Byrrh' (a reinforced wine). This carries perhaps the greatest toll for the L2 user as it involves potential misunderstandings. Next comes the level of allophones; saying the wrong allophone will not interfere with the actual meaning of the word but may increase the overall difficulty of comprehension if the listener has always to struggle to work out what phoneme is intended. And it certainly gives rise to characteristic accents. Consonant clusters may be a difficulty for some speakers; Spanish does not have an initial /st/ cluster so Spanish speakers tend to say 'estation' for 'station'. And we have seen that syllables and clusters pose problems for many.

The reason for these pronunciation problems has been called crosslinguistic transfer: a person who knows two languages transfers some aspect from one language to another, in other words this is language in a Lang, sense of linguistic competence. What can be transferred depends among other things on the relationship between the two languages. Fred Eckman, Elreyes and Iverson (2003) have drawn up three possibilities:

The First Language Has Neither of the Contrasting L2 Sounds

Korean for example does not have any phonemes corresponding to English /f~v/ as in 'fail/veil'. A Korean learning English has to learn two new phonemes from scratch.

The Second Language Has One of the L2 Sounds

Japanese for instance has a /p/ sound corresponding to English /p/ in 'paid' but no /f/ phoneme corresponding to that in 'fade'. Japanese learners of English have to learn an extra phoneme.

The Second Language Has Both Sounds as Allophones of the Same Phoneme

In Spanish plosive /d/ and fricative /ð/ are both allophones of the phoneme /d/. Spanish learners of English have to learn that what they take for granted as alternative forms of the same phoneme are in fact different phonemes in English. Similarly /l/ and /r/ are allophones of one phoneme in Japanese.

Which of these creates the most problems for learners? Logically it would seem that missing sounds would create problems: German has two fricatives /ç/ in 'Tuch' (towel) and /x/ 'Mach' (make), almost totally absent from English, apart from the isolated 'foreign' words such as 'loch' and 'Bach' for some people. So English people should have a problem acquiring these German phonemes. But they don't. By and large totally new sounds do not create particular problems. One exception might be click phonemes in some African languages, which speakers of non-click languages find it hard to master, though young babies are very good at it.

The combination that appears the trickiest to deal with is in fact when two allophones of one L1 phoneme appear as two phonemes in the second language, as we saw with Japanese problems with /l~r/. Once you have classed a particular sound as the same as that in your first language, i.e. Japanese /l/ goes with English /l/, you find it difficult to split its allophones into two phonemes. The more similar the two phonemes may be in the L1 and the L2 the more deceptive it may be.

The first language phonology affects the acquisition of the second through transfer because the learner projects qualities of the first language onto the second. The same happens in reverse in that people who speak a second language have a slightly different accent in their first language from monolinguals. The VOT research has shown subtle influences on L1 timing from the L2, for example French people who know English tend to have slightly longer VOTs for /t/ in French, their first language, compared to monolinguals.

L2 and Universal Processes of Acquisition

As well as transfer, L2 learners make use of universal processes common to all learners. Some problems are shared by L2 learners because of the similar processes of language processing and acquisition engraved into their minds.

For example, the simplification of consonant clusters happens almost regardless of L1. The earlier example of Germans having trouble with English voicing may be due, not to transfer from German, but to a universal preference for 'devoicing' of final consonants. Similarly the use of CV syllables by many L2 learners could reflect a universal tendency rather than transfer from specific first languages—babies after all babble in CV syllables. While epenthesis often depends on the structure of the first language, it nevertheless appears to be available to all L2 learners.

A number of models have been put forward to explain L2 phonological acquisition in a second language. The Ontogeny Phylogeny Model of language acquisition put forward by Roy Major (2001) claims that the early stages of L2 learning are characterised by interference from the second language. Then the learner starts to rely on universal processes common to all learners. The L2 elements themselves increase over time till finally the learner possesses the L2 forms. This is shown in the stages captured in Figure 4.3.

Major (2002) takes the example of English speakers learning the Spanish trilled [r]. They start with the English sound, written phonetically as [ɹ] (stage 1).

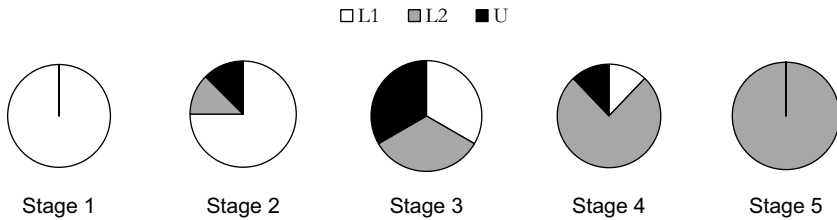


Figure 4.3 The Ontogeny Phylogeny Model (OPM) (Major, 2002).

In the next stages, though the Spanish [r] starts to appear, they also use a uvular trilled [ʀ] based on their universal processes. Spanish [r] continues to increase until it reaches 100%, while [ɹ] and [ʀ] decrease until they reach zero in stage 5. Learning pronunciation then depends upon three different components—L1 transfer, universal processes and L2. The relationship between these varies according to the learner's stage.

Box 4.7 Processes in Acquiring L2 Phonology

- A crucial element in L2 phonology acquisition is transfer from the L1, which depends partly on the nature of the two phonological systems.
- Nevertheless phonological acquisition also depends on universal processes of language acquisition available to the human mind.

4.4. Choosing a Model for Pronunciation Teaching

Focusing Questions

- What do you regard as a status accent for your L1? Do you speak it?

Keywords

RP (received pronunciation): the usual accent of British English given in books about English, spoken by a small minority in England.

English as Lingua Franca (ELF): English used as a means of communication among people with different first languages rather than between natives.

The underlying issue with pronunciation is who the students want to sound like—which model should they strive to emulate, in the Lang₃ sense of 'language' as an abstract entity? Usually this is taken to be some type of native speaker, an assumption questioned in Chapter 10. The issue of the target

affects pronunciation more than grammar, spelling or vocabulary because accent shows far more variation between native varieties of languages; written language may hardly ever give away the writer's dialect.

Box 4.8 Polish Teacher on Teaching English

Students are keen on modelling their pronunciation so that it can be close to British or American variants. They are also interested in learning non-coursebook colloquial phrases.

The usual model for teaching is a status form of the language within a country: you are supposed to speak French like the inhabitants of Paris, not those of Marseilles or Brittany. Regional accents are not taught, nor are class dialects other than that of the educated middle class. For English the status accents are non-regional, in the USA Standard American English (SAE), in the UK Received Pronunciation (RP), both of them spread across regions even if SAE is mostly in the North East USA, RP mostly in Southern England. Hence L2 students are rarely supposed to sound like Texans from Dallas, Glaswegians from Glasgow or Geordies from Newcastle upon Tyne. These RP and SAE status accents are spoken by a small minority of speakers, even if many others shift their original accents towards them to get on, say, in politics or broadcasting.

The goal for teaching British English has long been RP, which is spoken by a small minority even in England; my students in Newcastle grumble that they never hear it outside the classroom. The claimed advantages of RP were that, despite its small number of speakers located in only one country, it was comprehensible everywhere and had neutral connotations in terms of class and region. True as this may be, it does sound like a last-ditch defence of the powerful status form against the rest. A more realistic British standard nowadays might be Estuary English, popular among TV presenters and pop stars; the chief characteristics are the glottal stop /ʔ/ for /t/, inserted /t/ in words like 'sawing' and the vowel-like /w/ for /l/ as in /bju:ʔifuw/ 'beautiful', all present in my own speech. So the phonemes and intonation of a particular language that are taught to students should vary according to the choice of regional or status form. Most native speaker teachers have some problems in consistently using the appropriate model; I had to modify my pronunciation of 'often' as /ɔ:ftən/ by getting rid of the /t/ and changing the vowel to /ʊ/ to get the RP version /ʊfən/ because my students protested.

An additional problem in choosing a model comes when a language is spoken in many countries, each of which has its own status form; French is used officially in 28 countries, Arabic in 18 and English in 43. Should the target for French be a Francophone African one, a Canadian one or a French one? The English-speaking countries, from Australia to Canada, Scotland to

South Africa, each have their own variety, with its own internal variation; outside these countries, there are well-established varieties of English spoken in countries such as Singapore and India, now virtually recognised as forms of English in their own right as Singlish and Hinglish. A global language such as English faces the problem, not just of which local variety *within* a country to teach, but of which country to take as a model—if any. The choice of which national model to use can seldom be made without taking into account the political nature of language, particularly in ex-colonial countries, developed in Chapter 9.

Overall the student's target needs to be matched with the roles they will assume when using the second language. If they want to be baristas in coffee-bars, teach them an appropriate accent (in England an Italian accent might be an advantage); if they are training to be doctors in London, teach them how London doctors and patients speak. One problem is native speaker expectation: natives often expect non-natives to have an approximation to a status accent. Some English students were going for job experience in Switzerland and so were, logically enough, taught Swiss German. When they used this on the shop-floor, their fellow-worker found it entertaining, as foreigners were expected to speak High German, not Swiss German. Many students in England have complained to me that they did not want to acquire an RP accent because of its snobbish middle-class associations. It is up to the teacher to decide whether the students' wishes to sound like say Michael Caine or Elton John are in their best interests.

As we see throughout this book, recently people have been challenging the centrality of the native speaker as a model. In terms of pronunciation, apart from those living in English-speaking countries, what is the point of making learners of English understand and use a native standard accent like RP when virtually everybody they will meet is a fellow non-native speaker? The goal should be an accent that is maximally comprehensible by non-native speakers, leaving the native speaker out of the equation except for those who have to deal with them.

Jenny Jenkins (2000; 2002) has been proposing a syllabus for English pronunciation based on what non-native speakers of English as a lingua franca (ELF) need. In terms of consonants for example there is no point belabouring the difference between /ð/ (this) and /θ/ (thistle) as it rarely causes any misunderstanding (and affects only a small group of function words in any case). It would also be helpful if students were taught the 'rhotic' /r/ used in SAE (or regional English dialects) in front of consonants /bɔrd/ and preceding silence /sentər/ rather than the non-rhotic RP, which has no /r/ in these positions, /bɔd/ and /sent/. It is also interesting to note what she does *not* think is important, such as the difference between clear and dark allophones of /l/ in 'lip' and 'pill', and the intonation patterns, both of which teachers have laboured over for generations.

It should be noted, however, that these ideas are primarily derived from the analysis of learner English, that is to say the language of students, rather than

from the language of successful L2 users. If you take the ELF idea seriously, you need to teach what is important for international uses of English, not for talking with native speakers, as we see in Chapter 9, nor just for talking to fellow students in a classroom. For amusement only look at the webpage *Speech Reform* (available at <http://www.viviancook.uk/SLLandLT/SLL<5thed.html>), which satirises spelling reform by suggesting we could get by in English speech with 11 consonants /p t k s ʃ ð tʃ m n r w/ and three vowels /i e a/.

Box 4.9 Models of Pronunciation

- In teaching a native speaker variety, the choice has to be made between national varieties and between different local and class accents.
- In teaching an international language like English (ELF), the choice is which forms work best among non-native speakers from different countries.

4.5. Learning and Teaching Pronunciation

What does this mean for teaching? Most language teachers use ‘integrated pronunciation teaching’, as Joanne Kenworthy (1987) calls it, in which pronunciation is taught as an incidental to other aspects of language, similar to the focus on form described in the last chapter. *The Pronunciation Book* (Bowen and Marks, 1992), for example, describes including pronunciation work within activities primarily devoted to other ends, such as texts and dialogues. Some teachers correct wrong pronunciations when they arise on an *ad hoc* basis. Such incidental correction does not probably do much good directly if it concentrates on a single phoneme rather than on the role of the phoneme in the whole system; it may only improve the students’ pronunciation of a single word said in isolation. It also relies on direct correction being a good way of teaching, something which has been out of fashion in other areas of language teaching for generations. Correction may indirectly serve to raise the students’ awareness of pronunciation but may also succeed in embarrassing all but the most thick-skinned of students.

One clear implication from SLA research is that the learning of sounds is not just a matter of mastering the L2 phonemes and their predictable variants. At one level, it means learning the rules of pronunciation for the language, such as those for forming syllables; at another level, it is learning precise control over VOT. While phonemes are indeed important, pronunciation difficulties often have to do with general effects; in the case of English we have come across problems with voicing for German students, syllable structure for Arabic students, VOT for Spanish students, and so on. Language teaching should pay more attention to such general features of pronunciation rather than the phoneme.

Learners have their own interlanguage phonologies—temporary rules of their own. The sounds of the language are not just separate items on a list to be learnt one at a time but are related in a complex system. An English /p/ is different from a /b/ because it is voiced and fortis, different from a /t/ because it involves the lips, different from a /v/ because it is a stop consonant rather than a fricative, and so on. Teaching or correcting a single phoneme may not have much effect on the students' pronunciation or even have the wrong effect. It is like taking a brick out of a wall and replacing it with another. Unless the replacement fits exactly, all the other bricks will move to accommodate it, or at worst the wall will fall down. Understanding how to help students' pronunciation means relating the faults first to their current interlanguage and only secondly to the target. The differences between their speech and that of native speakers should not be corrected without taking into account both the interlanguage and the target system. The Austrian research suggests that teachers should be aware which sounds are going to improve gradually and which are never going to improve, so that these can be treated differently. It also suggests that pronunciation teaching should relate to the particular stage the learner is at, emphasising individual words at the beginning, relating pronunciation to the first language for intermediates, and treating the sound system of the new language in its own right for advanced students.

Let us go through some standard techniques for teaching pronunciation in the light of what we have been saying.

- **Use of phonetic script.** At advanced levels students are sometimes helped by looking at phonetic transcripts of spoken language using IPA or by making transcripts of speech themselves. As we see throughout this book, it is disputable whether such conscious awareness of pronunciation ever converts into the unconscious ability to speak, useful as it may be as an academic activity for future teachers. At the more practical level a familiarity with phonetic script enables students to look up the pronunciation of individual words, say London place-names such as 'Leicester Square' /lestə/ or 'Holborn' /həʊbən/ (even if a booking clerk at a Tube station distinctly said /həʊlbərn/ to me with an /l/ and an /r/).
- **Imitation.** Repetition of words or phrases has been the mainstay of pronunciation teaching: it is not only Henry Higgins who says 'Repeat after me "The rain in Spain stays mainly on the plain"'; the elementary course-book *New English File* (Oxenden, Latham-Koenig and Seligson, 2004) for example asks students to 'Listen and repeat the words and sounds' and 'Copy the rhythm'—whatever that means. At one level this is impromptu repetition at the teacher's command, at another repetition of dialogues in the language laboratory sentence by sentence. Of course repetition may not be helpful without feedback: you may not know you're getting it wrong unless someone tells you. Sheer imitation is not thought to be a productive method of language learning, as we see throughout this book.

It also ignores the fact that phonemes are part of a system of contrasts in the students' minds, not discrete items like words.

- **Discrimination of sounds.** Audiolingual teaching believed that, if you can't hear a distinction, you can't make it. This led to minimal-pair exercises in which the students have to indicate whether they hear 'lice', 'rice' or 'nice' in the sentence 'That's . . .'. The dangers include the unreality of such pairs as 'sink/think' taken out of any context, the rarity of some of the words used—I once taught the difference between 'soul' and 'thole'—and the over-dependence on the phoneme rather than say the distinctive feature and the syllable. Again useful if it is treated as building up the overall pronunciation system in the students' minds, rather than as learning the difference between two phonemes, say /ɪ/ and /i:/.
- **Consciousness-raising.** Given the rise of such approaches as FonF discussed in the last chapter, exercises can be used to make students more aware of pronunciation in general, say listening to tapes to discover the speaker's sex, age, education, region, or the formality of the situation. In other words rather than concentrating on specific aspects of speech, the students' ears are trained to hear things better. For example Eric Hawkins (1984) used to get students to listen to noises he made by hitting objects; they had to invent a transcription system so that they could 'play back' the noises he had made. Certainly an awareness of the range of phonological systems may help the student—the importance of the syllable may be news to them.
- **Communication.** In principle pronunciation materials could use the actual problems of communication as a basis for teaching. For instance both natives and non-natives confuse 'fifty' /fɪftɪ/ and 'fifteen' /fɪfti:n/ in real-world situations of shops etc, presumably because the final /n/ sounds like a nasalised vowel rather than a consonant. My daughter indeed was once given 80 milligrammes of a medication rather than 18, a rather dangerous confusion.

4.6. The Learning and Teaching of Intonation

Questions

- What do you convey to someone else when you say 'John' with your voice rising rather than falling?
- Do you notice when you make a mistake in intonation in the second language?

Intonation is the way that the pitch of the voice goes up and down during speech. Many ways of describing it have been tried. The analysis in the box shows a 'British' style analysis based on nuclear tones—significant changes in pitch on one or more syllables, here reduced to seven tones. These are demonstrated on a Youtube video (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_HGxfr7Sziw).

Box 4.10 English Intonation

High Fall	$\text{ˈ}e_s$	$\text{ˋ}yes$	High Rise	$\text{ˈ}e^s$	$\text{ˋ}yes?$
Low Fall	$\text{ˋ}e_s$	$\text{ˋ}yes$	Low Rise	$\text{ˋ}e^s$	$\text{ˋ}yes$
Fall-Rise	$\text{ˋ}e^s$	$\text{ˋ}yes.$	Rise-Fall	$\text{ˋ}e_s$	$\text{ˋ}yes$
Level	$c\ o\ o\ e\ e$	$\text{ˋ}cooe$			

The problem is that, while people agree that intonation is important, they disagree on its function. Some say that it is used for making grammatical distinctions: ‘He’s $\text{ˋ}going$ ’ with falling intonation is a statement; ‘He’s $\text{ˋ}going?$ ’ with a rising intonation is a question. Indeed rising intonation is perhaps the most frequent way of making questions in French. But this explanation is only partially successful as some English questions tend not to have rises—wh-questions such as ‘What’s the $\text{ˋ}time?$ ’ usually have falls. Others think that intonation is used to convey emotion and attitude: ‘He’ll $\text{ˋ}o$ ’ with a high fall sounds welcoming, with a low fall ‘He’ll $\text{ˋ}o$ ’ cold, with a fall-rise ‘He’ll $\text{ˋ}o$ ’ doubtful, and so on.

Intonation also varies between speakers. There is an overall difference between British and American patterns: apparently British men sound effeminate to American ears because of our use of a higher pitch range. Younger people around the world use rising intonation for statements, ‘I like $\text{ˋ}beer$ ’ where older people use a fall ‘I like $\text{ˋ}beer$ ’. Even within the United Kingdom there are differences (Grabe and Post, 2002). People living in Cambridge use 90% falls for declaratives, those in Belfast 80% rises. People in western areas such as Liverpool cut off the end of falling tones in short vowels. People in eastern areas such as Newcastle compress them.

The languages of the world fall into two groups: intonation languages and tone languages. Chinese is a ‘tone’ language that separates different words purely by intonation: ‘ $\text{ˋ}li\ z\text{ˋ}$ ’ (rising tone) means ‘pear’; ‘ $\text{ˋ}li\ z\text{ˋ}$ ’ (fall rise) means ‘plum’, and ‘ $\text{ˋ}li\ z\text{ˋ}$ ’ (falling) means ‘chestnut’. (However while a teacher of Chinese devised this example for me, some Chinese students tell me it doesn’t work for them). In tone languages a tone functions like a phoneme in that it distinguishes words with different meanings. Indeed this means that Chinese tones are stored in the left side of the brain along with the vocabulary, while English intonation is stored in the right side along with other emotional aspects of thinking. In intonation languages the intonation pattern has a number of functions; it may distinguish grammatical constructions, as in question ‘ $\text{ˋ}Beer?$ ’ versus statement ‘ $\text{ˋ}Beer$ ’; it may show discourse connections, for example a new topic starting high and finishing low; it may hint at the speakers’ attitudes, say polite ‘ $\text{ˋ}Good\text{ˋ}bye$ ’ versus rude ‘ $\text{ˋ}Good\text{ˋ}bye$!’

Adult L2 learners of Chinese have no problem in distinguishing Chinese tones, though with less confidence than native speakers of Chinese (Leather, 1987). Adults learning Thai, another tone language, were worse at learning tones than children (Ioup and Tansomboon, 1987).

L2 learners have major problems when going from an intonation language such as English to a tone language such as Chinese and vice versa. Hence people have found Chinese speaking English to be comparatively unemotional, because the speakers are unused to conveying emotion through intonation patterns, while in reverse English learners of Chinese make lexical mistakes because they are not used to using intonation to distinguish lexical meanings.

With languages of the same type, say English speakers learning Spanish, another intonation language, there are few problems with intonation patterns that are similar in the first and second languages. The problems come when the characteristics of the first language are transferred to the second. My hunch is that our interpretation of intonation patterns by L2 users is responsible for some national stereotypes—Italians sound excitable and Germans serious to an English ear, because of the meaning of their first language patterns when transferred to English.

It is also a problem when a pattern has a different meaning in the second language. A student once said to me at the end of a class ‘Good’bye!’; I assumed she was mortally offended. However, when she said it at the end of every class, I realised that it was an inappropriate intonation pattern transferred from her first language. Which reveals the great danger of intonation mistakes: the listener does not realise you have made a straightforward language mistake like choosing a wrong word but ascribes to you the attitude you have accidentally conveyed. Intonation mistakes are often not retrievable simply because no-one realises that a language mistake has been made.

As with VOT, there may be a reverse transfer of intonation back on to the learner’s first language. Dutch people who speak Greek have slightly different question intonation from monolinguals (Mennen, 2004) and the German of German children who speak Turkish is different from those who don’t (Queen, 2001). Once again the first language is affected by the second.

Teaching Intonation

Specialised intonation coursebooks like my own *Active Intonation* (1968) often present the learner with a graded set of intonation patterns for understanding and for repetition, starting, say, with the difference between rising ‘Well?’ and falling ‘Well’, and building up to more complex patterns through comprehension activities and imitation exercises. But the teaching techniques mostly stress practice and repetition; students learn one bit at a time, rather than having systems of their own; they repeat, they imitate, they practise, all in a very controlled way.

Some teaching techniques for intonation aim to make the student aware of the nature of intonation rather than to improve specific aspects. Several

examples can be found in *Teaching English Pronunciation* (Kenworthy, 1987). For instance, Kenworthy suggests getting two students to talk about holiday photographs without using any words other than ‘mmm’, ‘ah’ or ‘oh’. This makes them aware of the crucial role of intonation without necessarily teaching them any specific English intonation patterns, the objective underlying the communicative intonation exercises in my own textbook *Using Intonation* (1979). Dickerson (1987) made detailed studies of the usefulness of giving pronunciation rules to L2 learners, concluding that they are indeed helpful.

Other teaching exercises can link specific features of intonation to communication. For example the exercise ‘Deaf Mr Jones’ in my *Using Intonation* (Cook, 1979) provides students with a map of Islington and asks them to play two characters: Mr Jones, who is deaf, and a stranger. Mr Jones decides which station he is at on the map and asks the stranger the way. Hence Mr Jones will constantly be producing intonation patterns that check what the stranger says within a reasonably natural conversation.

Box 4.11 Learning Intonation

- A major L2 learning problem is moving between the two major ways of using intonation in the world’s languages: tone languages where intonation shows difference in lexical meaning and intonation languages where intonation shows grammar, attitude etc.
- Intonation mistakes can be dangerous because it is not obvious to the participants that a mistake has been made.

Box 4.12 Pronunciation and Teaching

- Pronunciation teaching should recognise the diversity of levels of pronunciation in a language including phonemes, allophones, syllables, intonation etc.
- The learning of pronunciation involves aspects of the learner’s first language, universal learning processes and aspects of the second language.
- Teaching has mostly made use of conventional techniques of phonetic scripts, imitation, sound discrimination and communication.
- Students can also be made more aware of sound features of language.

Discussion Topics

- 1 How important is a native-like accent to using a second language? Which native accent?
- 2 How could teachers best exploit the kinds of stages that students go through in the acquisition of pronunciation?

- 3 How much of the difficulty of acquiring L2 phonology is due to the learner's first language?
- 4 Do you accept that English is now different from other languages because it functions like a lingua franca?
- 5 What uses can you find in coursebooks for phonetic script? What other uses can you think of?

Further Reading

There are few readily accessible treatments of the areas covered in this chapter. Kenworthy (1987), *Teaching English Pronunciation*, provides a readable and trustworthy account of pronunciation for teachers. A good quick overview is I. Roca (2016), 'Phonology and English spelling', in Cook and Ryan (2016), *The Routledge Handbook of the English Writing System*.

Key Phonological Terms

A fuller account can be found on the webpage *The Sound System of Language* (available at <http://www.viviancook.uk/SLLandLT/SLL<5thed.html>).

allophones: different forms that a phoneme takes in particular contexts, e.g. in English the aspirated /p/ (with a puff of air [p^h]) in 'pill' versus the unaspirated /p/ (without a puff of air) in 'lip'.

consonant: phonetically a sound produced by obstructing the air coming from the mouth in some way by blocking it as in plosives like /p/ and /g/ or by making friction through contact as in fricatives like /f/ and /s/; phonologically a consonant occurs at the beginning or end of the syllable rather than in the nucleus.

distinctive feature: distinctive features are a way of analysing speech sounds as a certain number of on/off elements. So the /b/ in English *bass* has the feature +voice, the /p/ of *piano* has the feature –voice, and so on.

epenthesis: padding out the syllable by adding extra vowels or consonants, e.g. 'Espain' for 'Spain'.

intonation: the systematic rise and fall in the pitch of the voice during speech, used in English to convey some emotional and grammatical meanings, but in tone languages like Chinese used to convey lexical meaning, i.e. differences between words, in a similar way to differences between phonemes. Youtube at: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_HGxfR7Sziw.

minimal pair: a way of showing and testing for the phonemes of a language through pairs of words differing in a single sound: 'book' /buk/ versus 'look' /luk/.

nuclear tone: significant change in pitch on one or more syllables, fall, rise-fall etc.

phonemes: the sounds of a language that are systematically distinguished from each other, e.g. /s/ from /t/ in ‘same’ and ‘tame’, as opposed to sounds that are phonetically different but do not distinguish words (allophones), e.g. clear /l/ in /lip/ versus dark /l/ in /pil/.

Box 4.13 English Phonemes

consonants:

/p/ pan	/t/ tar	/k/ can	/b/ buy	/d/ die	/g/ guy
/f/ fin	/θ/ thin	/s/ seal	/ʃ/ shin	/v/ van	/ð/ than
/z/ zeal	/ʒ/ garage	/m/ lame	/n/ lane	/ŋ/ long	/l/ lust
/tʃ/ cheat	/dʒ/ just	/r/ red	/h/ hot	/w/ wish	/j/ yet

vowels (RP):

/ɪ/ kin	/i:/ keen	/ʊ/ foot	/u:/ boot	/ɒ/ boss	/e/ bet
/ə/ about	/ə:/ bird (sometimes given as /ɜ:/		/ʌ/ but	/ɑ:/ bath	
/ɔ:/ more		/æ/ bat			

diphthongs (RP)

/eɪ/ lane	/aɪ/ line	/ɔɪ/ loin /	əʊ/ cone	/aʊ/ cow	/ɪə/
beer /ɛə/ bear		/ʊə/ sure			

phonetic alphabet/script: a way of transcribing the sounds of language accurately through an agreed set of phonetic symbols, most commonly the IPA (International Phonetic Alphabet).

Box 4.14 Possible English Syllables

V	/aɪ/ aye
CV	/baɪ/ buy
VC	/aɪl/ isle
CVC	/baɪt/ bite
CCV..	/brɑɪt/ bright
CCCV..	/straɪk/ strike
..VCC	/baɪts/ bites
..VCCC	/sɔ:ltz/ salts
..VCCCC	/prɒmpts/ prompts

phonetics: the sub-discipline of linguistics that studies the production and perception of the actual speech sounds themselves, distinct from phonology.

phonology: the area of linguistics that studies the sound systems of particular languages, contrasting with phonetics.

syllable: a unit of phonology consisting of a structure of phonemes, stresses etc.

syllable structure: how consonants (C) and vowels (V) may be combined into syllables in a particular language. For example English has CVC syllables while Japanese has CV. See Box 4.14 for examples.

tone language: a language in which different words are separated by intonation, for instance Chinese.

voice onset time: (VOT): the moment when voicing of the vocal cords starts during the production of a plosive consonant.

vowel: phonetically a sound produced without obstruction of the air, /æ/, /u:/ etc; phonologically a sound at the core nucleus of the syllable rather than the beginning or end.

5 Acquiring and Teaching a New Writing System

Chapter 1 points out how both SLA research and language teaching have assumed that writing depends upon speech. This has led the unique skills of written language being undervalued and to a lack of attention to the demands that writing places on the student in a second language. A spelling mistake is as important as a pronunciation mistake, indeed more so in that bad spelling carries overtones of illiteracy and stupidity which bad pronunciation does not.

Box 5.1 Chinese students on the writing system

- Spelling was the easiest part for me on account of the similarity between English alphabets and Chinese Pinyin.
- I used the rules of IPA to memorize the new words effectively, say as long as I can pronounce the words, I can spell the word correctly.

Just as pronunciation involves both lower-level skills and higher-order structures, so writing goes from physical skills involving forming letters to higher level skills such as spelling to the highest level of discourse skills involved in writing essays etc. More information on the English writing system can be found in Cook and Ryan (2016); on writing systems in general in Cook and Bassetti (2005). Technical keywords are explained in the glossary at the chapter end. Many of the areas here are expanded on my *Writing Systems* website (available at <http://www.viviancook.uk/SLLandLT/SLL<5thed.html>).

5.1. Writing Systems

Focusing Questions

- Which words do you have trouble spelling? Why? What do you do to improve your spelling?
- What spelling mistakes do your students make? Why? What do you do to improve your students' spelling?

The big division in the writing systems of the world is between those based on meaning and those based on sounds, seen in the diagram. The Chinese character-based system of writing links a written sign to a meaning; the character 人 means a person, the sign 象 an elephant; it is not necessary to know how 人 is pronounced or to even know what the Chinese spoken word actually is in order to read it. A Chinese-English dictionary does not tell you the spoken form: it is simply given as 'mouth'. Hence speakers of different dialects of Chinese can communicate in writing even when they can't understand each other's speech.

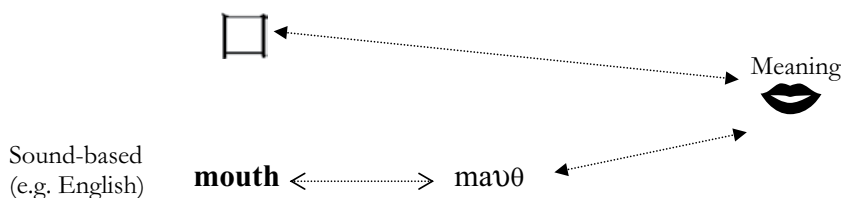


Figure 5.1 Meaning-based and sound-based writing.

The other main type of writing system in the world links the written sign to its spoken form rather than its meaning. The English word <table> corresponds to the spoken form /teibl/; the meaning is reached via the spoken form. Knowing the written form of the word tells you how it is pronounced but knowing that 'table' is pronounced /teibl/ gives you no idea what it means. (Note that when words or letters are cited purely for their orthographic form they are enclosed in angle brackets <table>, parallel to slant brackets for phonological form /teibl/). The unit that is used for correspondence rules is sometimes called a 'grapheme'. A list of the main graphemes for English is given in Box 5.16.

Though these routes between writing and meaning are distinct in principle, in practice they are often mixed. Numbers function like a meaning-based system regardless of the language involved: '123 . . .' and have the same meaning in most languages so that you do not have to know Greek to know what '1' means on an airport departure board in Greece. Some keyboard signs familiar from computers behave in similar ways: they either have spoken forms that virtually nobody uses in English such as <&> (ampersand) or <~> (tilde) or their spoken forms vary from place to place or person to person without changing their meaning; <#> is called 'flat' by some people, 'the pound sign' in the United States, 'hash' in England and, supposedly, 'octothorpe' in Canada, after a Mr Thorpe who invented it and the prefix 'octo' from its eight points. It is the meaning of these signs that counts, not how they are pronounced.

Even a sound-based writing system like English is full of written symbols that can only be read aloud if you know the words they correspond to—<£, @, \$, %, . . .>. An interesting example is arithmetic where everyone knows what <=> means in ‘2 + 2 = 4’ but some people say ‘2 and 2 make 4’, some ‘2 plus 2 is/ are 4’, some ‘2 and 2 equals 4’.

Box 5.2 Exercise: Spot the es

Here is the opening of Charles Dickens’ *The Pickwick Papers* (1837). Read through it quickly and cross out all the letter <e>s.

The first ray of light which illumines the gloom, and converts into a dazzling brilliancy that obscurity in which the earlier history of the public career of the immortal Pickwick would appear to be involved, is derived from the perusal of the following entry in the Transactions of the Pickwick Club, which the editor of these papers feels the highest pleasure in laying before his readers, as a proof of the careful attention, indefatigable assiduity, and nice discrimination, with which his search among the multifarious documents confided to him has been conducted.

Now check against the answers in Box 5.14.



Indeed both the meaning-based and sound-based writing routes are used by everybody to some extent whichever their language. Try the e-deletion exercise in Box 5.2 to test this. Frequent English words such as ‘the’ and ‘are’ take the meaning-based route as wholes rather than being converted to sounds letter-by-letter; other words go through the sound-based route. Usually with tests like this most native speakers fail to delete all 50 <e>s, mostly because they do not ‘see’ the <e> in ‘the’ (of which there are 13 examples), only the whole word <the>. In fact non-natives are better at crossing out this <e> than natives, one of the few cases where non-native speakers beat natives because they have had less practice.

The sound-based route is nevertheless always available: given new words like ‘Hushidh’, ‘Zdorab’ or ‘Umene’ (characters in an SF novel), we can always have a stab at reading them aloud despite never having seen them before, using the sound-based route. Nevertheless very common words such as ‘the’ or ‘of’ or idiosyncratic words like ‘yacht’ /jɒt/ or ‘colonel’ /kənl/ or ‘lieutenant’ (/leftənənt/ in British English) have to be remembered as individual word shapes. English writing is not just sound-based but uses the meaning-based route as well.

Sound-based writing systems have many variations. Some use written signs for whole syllables; for example the Japanese hiragana system uses た to correspond to the whole syllable ‘ta’, な to ‘na’, and so on (rather like

text messages in English ('Gr8 2 c u'). Other systems use written signs only for spoken consonants so that Hebrew ד ר gives the consonants 'd' and 'r' (in a right-to-left direction) and the reader has to work out whether this corresponds to the word pronounced /diʁ/ (stable) or to /daʁ/ (mother-of-pearl).

Many languages use the alphabetic system in which a written sign stands in principle for a phoneme, even if there are different alphabets in Urdu, Russian and Spanish. Languages vary, however, in how straightforwardly they apply the alphabetic system. If a language has one-to-one links between letters and sounds, it is called 'transparent', popularly 'phonetic'. Italian or Finnish for example have highly transparent writing systems. But even in Italian <c> corresponds to two different sounds depending on which vowel comes next, /k/ in 'caffè' or /tʃ/ in 'cento'. English is much less transparent and has complicated rules for connecting letters and sounds. The diphthong /ei/ can be spelled in at least twelve ways: 'lake', 'aid', 'foyer', 'gauge', 'stay', 'café', 'steak', 'weigh', 'ballet', 'matinée', 'sundae', and 'they'. In reverse, the letter <a> can be pronounced in at least eleven ways: 'age' /eidʒ/, 'arm' /ɑ:m/, 'about' /əbaʊt/, 'beat' /i:/, 'many' /meni/, 'aisle' /ail/, 'coat' /kəʊt/, 'ball' /bɔ:l/, 'canal' /kənəʊl/, 'beauty' /bju:ti/, 'cauliflower' /kəʊlɪflaʊə/. The rules for connecting letters to sounds and vice versa are known as correspondence rules. In a sense Chinese and Japanese characters are least transparent of all as they have little connection to their pronunciation, particularly in Japanese.

Even the ways in which people make the marks on the page vary from language to language. In some countries children are told to form letters by making horizontal strokes first and vertical strokes second; in others the reverse. The consequences can be seen in English 'to' written by a native speaker of Japanese  and capital <E> written by a native speaker of Chinese , in both of which the horizontal strokes have clearly been made before the vertical. The actual way of holding the writing instrument may be different. According to Rosemary Sassoon (1995), a typical brush-hold for Chinese writers may damage the writer's wrist if used as a pen-hold for writing English. Language teachers should be on the alert for such problems when they are teaching students who have very different scripts in their first language.

The direction that writing takes on the page is also important. Some writing systems use columns, for instance traditional Chinese and Japanese writing, others use lines, say French, Cherokee and Persian. Within those writing systems that use lines, there is a choice between the right-to-left direction found in Arabic and Urdu and the left-to-right direction found in Roman and Devanagari scripts. While this does not seem to create major problems for L2 learners, students have told me about Arabic/English bilingual children who try to write Arabic from left-to-right. Rosemary Sassoon (1995) found a Japanese child who wrote English on alternate lines from right-to-left and from left-to-right, a system called boustrophedon, now known only from ancient scripts.

Box 5.3 L1 and L2 Writing Systems

Students may have problems transferring various aspects of their L1 writing system to another language, such as:

- whether it is a sound-based or meaning-based writing system.
- the direction in which writing goes on the page.
- the ways of making letters.

5.2. Spelling

Focusing Questions

- Do you think English spelling is a ‘near optimal system’, as Noam Chomsky calls it?
- Can you remember any spelling rules for English?

The major problem with English for many students, however, is the correspondence rules that govern how letters are arranged in words, in other words spelling. English is far from having a straightforward, transparent system in which one letter stands for one sound. The letter <h> for example plays an important role in consonant pairs such as <th, sh, gh, ph, ch, wh> without being pronounced as /h/ in any of them. The sound /tʃ/ is usually spelled <ch> with two letters at the beginning of words as in ‘chap’ but <tch> with three letters at the end as in ‘patch’; indeed the extra letter gives people the impression that there are more sounds in ‘patch’ than in ‘chap’.

The popular belief is that English spelling is chaotic and unsystematic—‘the evil of our irregular orthography’ according to Noah Webster, the dictionary maker—usually based on the ideal, fully transparent, alphabetic system. English is far from transparent: it additionally involves not only a system of linking whole items to meanings as in ‘of’ and ‘yacht’ but also a system of orthographic regularities, such as <wh> only occurring initially, as in ‘white’ and ‘when’. Hence it should not be forgotten that native speakers of English also have problems with spelling, some the same as L2 users, some different. On my website the spelling test called *The Most Difficult Words* (<http://home.page.ntlworld.com/vivian.c/TestsFrame.htm>) has been taken by over 100,000 people yet at the time of writing only 31 have e-mailed me to say that they scored 100% (and those mostly worked for publishers).

The charge of being unsystematic ignores the many rules of English spelling, only some of which we are aware of. The one spelling rule that any native speaker claims to know is ‘i before e except after c’, which explains the spelling of ‘receive’. There are exceptions to this rule such as plurals ‘currencies’ and when <c> corresponds to /ʃ/ as in ‘sufficient’. The rule applies

at best to ten base forms in the hundred million running words of the British National Corpus along with their derived forms: ‘receive’, ‘ceiling’, ‘receipt’, ‘perceive’, ‘conceive’, ‘deceive’, ‘conceit’, ‘transceiver’, ‘fluorescein’, and ‘ceildh’.

Box 5.4 Structure Word Spelling Rules

A. The Three Letter Rule

Structure words have less than three letters; content words can be any length, from three letters upwards (but must *not* have less than three letters):

so:sew/sow to:two/too we:wee oh:owe by:bye/buy no:know
an:Ann I:eye/aye in:inn be:bee or:ore/oar/awe

B. The TH Rule

In structure words, the initial <th> spelling corresponds to /ð/, ‘this’ and ‘they’; in content words, initial <th> corresponds to /θ/ as in ‘thesis’ and ‘Thelma’.

the:therapy than:thank thou:thousand this:thistle thy:thigh
though:thought that:thatch those:thong them:thematic

C. The Titles Rule

In titles of books, films etc, content words usually start with capital letters, structure words with lower case.

The Case of the Stuttering	Handbook of Bilingualism
Bishop	The Tragedy of King
Strangers on a Train	Richard the Second
I Wish I could Shimmy like my Sister Kate	

Nevertheless there are rules that do work better for English. One set is the structure word rules, given in Box 5.4. Teachers are usually aware how structure words such as ‘of’ and ‘the’ behave in English sentences compared to content words such as ‘oven’ and ‘drive’, how they are pronounced in specific ways such as the voiced /ð/ ‘these’ compared to the unvoiced /θ/ in ‘think’ and ‘thesis’, and how they have stressed versus weak forms, /θi:/ versus /ðə/, as mentioned in Chapters 2 and 3, but they are unaware that they are also spelled in particular ways.

The **three letter rule** describes how only structure words can consist of a single letter—‘I’ and ‘a’—or two letters—‘an’ and ‘no’; content words have three letters or more. If a content word could be spelled with one or two letters, extra letters have to be added to make it up to three or more—‘eye’,

'Ann', 'know'. While this three letter rule seems perfectly obvious once it has been explained, most people have no idea it exists. There are of course exceptions; 'go' and 'ox' have two letters but are content words (even if 'go' can act like an auxiliary 'I am going to see him'); American 'ax' is an exception, British 'axe' is not. Nevertheless the rule is a small generalization about English spelling that works nearly all the time.

The **TH rule** for structure words similarly reflects the fact that the only spoken English words that start with /ð/ are structure words like 'these' and 'them'; hence the spelling rule that in structure words alone initial <th> corresponds to /ð/, all the rest have /θ/. Again this fact about the spelling of structure words seems obvious once it is understood. The exceptions are, on the one hand, a small group of words in which initial <th> corresponds to /t/ such as 'Thai' and 'Thames', on the other the unique structure word 'through' in which <th> corresponds to /θ/.

The third rule of spelling that affects structure words is the **Titles Rule**. This affects the use of capital letters in titles of books, songs etc where content words are given capitals but structure words are not, as in <Context and Culture in Language Learning>, <Focus on Form in Classroom Second Language Acquisition> and <Sociocultural Theory and the Genesis of Second Language Development>, to take three books that happen to be lying on my desk. This convention is not always adhered to and some booklists avoid all capitals in book titles. But if you can't identify structure words you won't be able to apply it at all.

Box 5.5 Vowel Correspondence Rules

A. silent 'e' rule. A silent <e> following a single consonant shows that the preceding vowel letter corresponds to a long vowel; lack of an <e> shows a short vowel.

long free vowels	short checked vowels
'a' /eɪ/ Dane	/æ/ Dan
'e' /i:/ Pete	/e/ pet
'i' /aɪ/ fine	/ɪ/ fin
'o' /əv/ tote	/ɒ/ tot
'u' /(j)u:/ dune	/ʌ/ dun

B. the consonant doubling rule. A double consonant shows that the preceding vowel corresponds to a short vowel rather than a long one.

Single consonant	Double consonant
'a' /eɪ/ planing	/æ/ planning
'e' /i:/ beta	/e/ better
'i' /aɪ/ biter	/ɪ/ bitter
'o' /əv/ hoping	/ɒ/ hopping
'u' /(j)u:/ super	/ʌ/ supper

Perhaps the most complex set of spelling rules in English are the **Vowel Correspondence Rules**, from which Box 5.5 above gives a small selection. As RP English has 5 vowel letters and about 20 vowel phonemes, considerable ingenuity has been devoted over the centuries to telling the reader what sounds vowel letters correspond to. The **silent 'e' rule** gives the sound correspondence of the preceding vowel. If there is a silent <e> following a single consonant, the preceding vowel is 'long': the letter <a> will correspond to /ei/ 'Dane', <e> to /i:/ 'Pete', <i> to /i/ 'fine', <o> to /ɔv/ 'tote', <u> to /ju:/ 'dune'. If there is no <e>, the vowel is 'short': <a> corresponds to /æ/ 'Dan', <e> to /e/ 'pet', <i> to /ɪ/ 'fin', <o> to /ɒ/ 'tot', <u> to /ʌ/ 'dun'.

The terms 'short' and 'long' vowels do not have the same meaning here as in phonetics since three of the so-called 'long' vowels are in fact diphthongs. For this reason, some people prefer to call the five short vowels 'checked', the five long vowels 'free'. This rule has become known as the **Fairy E Rule** after the way that it is explained to children: 'Fairy E waves its wand and makes the preceding vowel say its name'; the long vowel sounds here happen to be the same as the names for the five vowel letters. People who attack silent <e>, like the <e> in 'fate' /ei/, as being useless are missing the point: the silent <e> letter acts as a marker showing that the preceding <a> is said /ei/ not /æ/, i.e. is different from the <a> in 'fat'.

The same relationship between long and short vowels underlies the **Consonant Doubling Rule** in Box 5.5. A doubled consonant in writing, say <tt> in 'bitter' or <nn> in 'running', has nothing to do with saying the consonant twice but shows the correspondence of the preceding vowel is short: the <pp> in 'supper' shows that the preceding <u> corresponds to /ʌ/, the <p> in 'super' that <u> is the long /u:/. This version of the doubling rule is highly simplified and ignores the fact that some consonants never double, <h, j>, or rarely double, <v> and <k> (apart from 'revving' and 'trekker'), and that British and North American spelling styles are slightly different, as we see below. As always, there are exceptions such as doubled consonants after long vowels, as in 'small' and 'furry'. What the rules we have discussed show, however, is that there is a system to English spelling. It may indeed be complicated, but then so is the system for speaking English.

SLA research has mostly tackled the problems that arise in acquiring a second language with a different overall writing system from the first language, whether going from a meaning-based route to a sound-based one, as in Chinese students of English, or from a sound-based route using only consonant letters to one using both vowels and consonants, as in Hebrew students of English, or from one type of alphabetic script to another, say Greek to English or English to German. Chikamatsu (1996) found that English people tended to transfer their L1 sound-based strategies to Japanese as an L2, Chinese people their L2 meaning-based strategies. In the reverse direction, the Chinese meaning-based system handicaps reading in English; upper high school students in Taiwan read at a speed of 88 words per minute, compared to 254 for

native speakers (Haynes and Carr, 1990). Students' difficulties with reading may have more to do with the basic characteristics of their L1 writing system than with grammar or vocabulary. Indeed the characteristics of the writing system you learn first may affect you in other ways; Chinese people for example are more visually dominated than English people, in part probably due to their character-based writing system.

Box 5.6 gives examples of some spelling mistakes made by L2 users of English. Many of them are similar to those made by native speakers. This tends to show that the English spelling system itself is to blame rather than the difficulties of writing in a second language. 'Accommodate' is often spelled wrong because people are unsure of the consonant doubling rules and gamble that consonants would not be doubled twice in the same word—similarly for 'address'. The vowel correspondence rules cause problems for native speakers as well as non-native users of English; what does the final spoken /ə/ in 'grammar' /græmə/ correspond to in writing? <ar>, <a>, <ah>, <or> and <er> would all be equally plausible if sound correspondences were all that mattered. Research of my own showed that adult L2 user university students made about as many spelling errors as 15-year-old English native children. In one sense this is disappointing in that they are not writing like native adults. In another way it is encouraging; the students would probably be very pleased to be told that they spoke English as well as 15-year-old native children.

Box 5.6 Mistakes with English Spelling

The words most commonly misspelled by L2 users of English

accommodating, because, beginning, business, career, choice, definite, develop, different, describe, government, interest(ing), integrate, kindergarten, knowledge, life, necessary, particular, professional, professor, really, study/student, their/there, which, would

Some typical L2 mistakes

because: beause, beaucause, becace, becaus, becouse, becuase, beacause, begause, becuse, becuas

address: adres, adress, adresse

business: busines, bussines, buisness, bussiness

grammar (etc): gramma, grammatikal, grammartical, grammer

professional: profesional, professinal, proffessional, proffesional

sincerely: sinarely, sincerelly, sincerley, sincersly

student/studying/studied: studet, stuinet, studing, studied, stuent

Just as an L2 user's accent can betray their first language, so can their spelling indicate not only the kind of L1 writing system they were taught first but also the phonology of their first language. An Arabic student may well leave out vowels from their spellings, say 'coubrd' (cupboard) or 'recive' (receive), showing a characteristic feature of the consonantal Arabic writing system: they may also add epenthetic vowels 'punishment', showing that <shm> is not a possible consonant sequence in Arabic. Box 5.7 gives some examples of typical spelling mistakes from different L2 learners. Note that these are based on a fairly small corpus of student mistakes (available at <http://www.viviancook.uk/SLLandLT/SLL<5thed.html>) and are often disputed by students I have discussed them with.

These do indeed reveal something about the learners' L1 and L1 writing systems. The French obviously double consonants differently, the Greek clearly have different letters, the Dutch have double <k>.

Box 5.7 Problems for Users of Specific L1 Writing Systems

Arabic. Substituted vowels 'obundant', additional 'epenthetic' vowels 'punishment', and phonological mistakes 'manshed' ('mentioned'). Unique: <c> for <q> 'cuickly'.

Chinese. Omission of consonants 'subjet'; addition of <e> 'boyes'.

Dutch. Double <kk> 'wekk'.

French. Wrong double consonants 'comming'; vowel substitution 'materiel'.

German. Omission of <a> 'h'ppened'; substitution of <i> for <e> 'injoind'. Unique: 'telephon'.

Greek. Consonant substitution, <d>/<t> 'Grade Britain'; doubling unnecessarily 'sattisfaction'; transposition 'sceince'. Unique <c> for <g> 'Creek' (Greek).

Italian. Consonant omission 'wether' (whether); failing to double 'biger'.

Japanese. Consonant substitution 'gramatikal'; epenthetic vowels 'difficuly'; CV transposition 'prospretiy'. Unique: <l> and <r> 'grobal'.

Korean. Consonant omission 'fators'; lack of doubling 'poluted'; omitted vowels 'therefor'.

Spanish. Consonant omission 'wich'; lack of doubling 'til'; unnecessary doubling 'exclusive'.

Urdu. Vowel omission 'sotimes'; final <d> and <t> 'lef', 'woul'.

Thanks to Cambridge English, I collected 18,000 spelling mistakes made with verbs from First Certificate of English examination scripts from many languages. The most common type of mistake was letter doubling (both consonant and vowel) with 35% 'specialize', followed by letter omission with

19% 'exlaimed' and using the wrong letter with 18% 'enjoing' and adding an extra letter with 10% 'boreing'. Clearly teaching could take these overall patterns of spelling mistakes into account. Something more is needed than correction of individual mistakes as and when they occur.

Box 5.8 Spelling and L2 Learning

- The English spelling system has a number of specific rules such as structure word rules.
- L2 learners of English make spelling mistakes based in part on their L1 writing system and in part based on their lack of knowledge of the English spelling rules.

5.3. Punctuation

Focusing Questions

- Are you confident about your punctuation?
- What do you think that punctuation is for?

While some teachers are aware of spelling and do try to correct individual errors, the area of punctuation has been virtually ignored. Punctuation consists of the use of additional marks as well as the letters of the alphabet, such as commas <,> or full stops <.>, known in American style as periods. Many writing systems have similar punctuation marks, with slight variations in their form. Quotation marks for instance vary between English <" ">, Italian goose-feet <« »> and Swiss goosefeet <» «>. Spanish uses inverted question marks <¿> and exclamation marks <¡> at the beginning of sentences. Chinese has a hollow full stop <◦>; Catalan a raised one <·>.

The most important English punctuation mark is literally invisible. Compare:

WillyoustillneedmewillyoustillfeedmewhenImsixtyfour?

with:

Will you still need me, will you still feed me, when I'm sixty-four?

Apart from punctuation, the difference is word spaces: modern English writing separates words with a space, recognised as a character in computer jargon. Spaces are not intrinsic to alphabetic writing. In Europe the use of spaces between words only became widespread in the 8th century AD. Sound-based writing systems do not necessarily have word spaces, such as Vietnamese, or may use word spaces for different purposes, such as Thai. Character-based writing systems like Chinese and Japanese do not have word spaces but put

spaces between characters, which may or may not correspond to words. Some have seen the invention of the word space as crucial to the ability to read.

Another little considered aspect of punctuation is the actual forms of letters. Starting a sentence with a capital letter is one familiar use. In English, capitals are used for proper names, <Bill> rather than <bill>, for certain groups of words like months <January> and for content words in the Titles Rule seen in Box 5.4. In German capital letters are used for all nouns, a practice occasionally found in seventeenth century English. Underlining and italics are used for questions of emphasis and for book titles in academic references. Underlining is disliked by typographers and rarely found in books because it destroys the descender of the letter below the line in letters like <p, g, y> and so makes it less legible: <I'm trying to pay the mortgage> versus <I'm trying to pay the mortgage>.

The perpetual debate about punctuation is what it's for. On the one hand punctuation has sometimes been seen as a guide to reading aloud. The 18th century rule for English was that a full stop <.> meant a full pause, a colon <:> was half that, a semicolon <:> half that, and a comma <,> half that, rather like the relationship between musical notes. While the colon and semi-colon may now be rare, people reading aloud may still use pauses of different lengths for the full stop and the comma. The sentence-final punctuation marks <. ? ! > correspond roughly to intonation patterns in reading aloud—<?> to rising intonation, <.> to falling, <!> to extra pitch movement or rise-fall intonation. Within the sentence, commas in lists may show rising intonation 'I bought some apples, some pears, and some bananas'.

Box 5.9 Sample Punctuation Sentence

Add the appropriate punctuation marks and capital letters to this sentence. Answers are in Box 5.15 at the end of the chapter.

now of old the name of that forest
was greenwood the great and its
wide halls and aisles were the haunt
of many beasts and of birds of bright
song and there was the realm of
king thranduil under the oak and
the beech but after many years
when well nigh a third of that age of
the world had passed a darkness
crept slowly through the wood from
the southward and fear walked there
in shadowy glades fell beasts came
hunting and cruel and evil creatures
laid there their snares

J.R.R. Tolkien (1977), *The Silmarillion*

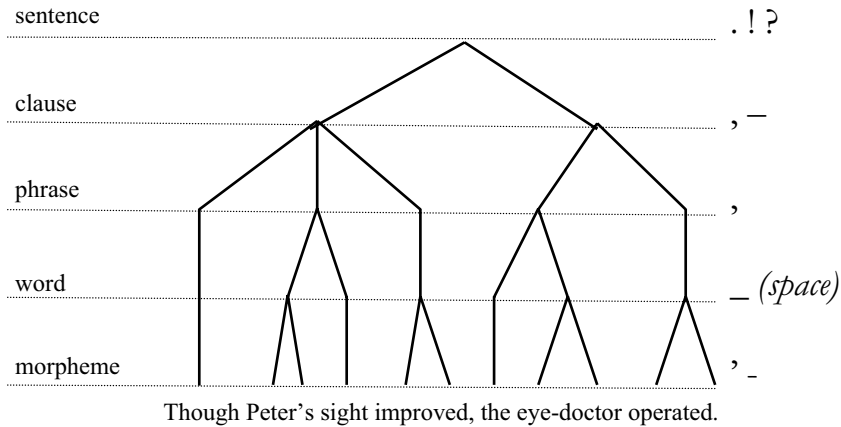
Grammatical unit**Punctuation mark**

Figure 5.2 Punctuation and phrase structure in English.

On the other hand punctuation has also been seen as a guide to grammatical structure. At one level, it separates different constructions, whether sentences with full stops, or phrases with commas. But it also provides a structure for complex written prose where large sentences can be constructed out of smaller sentences by using colons and semi-colons, to yield sentences such as those seen in Box 5.9 or in Charles Dickens' novels. This is a unique feature of written language, vaguely related perhaps to discourse intonation in speech. Without the ability to put together such higher-level sentences, a writer will come across as lightweight and over-simple.

Box 5.10 Punctuation

- Punctuation is used both as a guide for reading the sentence aloud and as a way of showing sentence structure.
- Punctuation includes punctuation marks, use of capitals, word spaces and other features, all of which can vary between writing systems.

What Do Students Need to Learn about Second Writing Systems?

We can then summarise what L2 students need to learn, assuming that they are already literate in one writing system, i.e. that it is not the L2 teacher's job to cope with basic literacy problems, which would be a different issue.

The Appropriate Direction of Reading and Writing

Arabic students learning English need to acquire the left-to-right direction, English students learning Arabic that it goes from right-to-left. If the second language uses a different direction, this may be quite a burden on the student.

Making and Recognising the Actual Letter or Character Shapes

English people learning Russian need to learn the Cyrillic script; Japanese people learning German the Roman alphabet. The Japanese course *Columbus 21* (2012) for instance displays handwritten letters on a four-line stave in normal and italic forms. Again it may be difficult to go from Chinese characters to the Roman alphabet, from a German script to Arabic letters. In principle the number of letters or signs needed will depend on the writing system involved, whether the scores needed for alphabetic systems or the tens of thousands needed for character-based systems.

Using the Phonological Processing Route

Learning a sound-based L2 writing system means primarily learning that <t> corresponds with /t/, and so on. Depending on writing system, this will be a matter of syllables, all the phonemes or the consonants alone. Moving from an L1 writing system that prioritises the meaning-route to an L2 writing system that emphasises the sound-based route is a considerable step, as is moving in the opposite direction.

Using the Lexical, Morpheme-Based Processing Route

Learning a meaning-based writing system means mostly learning that 人 means 'person', and so on. Switching one's preferred route between different L1 and L2 writing systems can be difficult.

Orthographic Regularities in Less Transparent Writing Systems

Less transparent sound-based writing systems like English are not just straightforward correspondences between letters and sounds but make use of complex spelling rules, which have to be learnt.

Using Punctuation Marks and Other Typographic Features

Differences in punctuation and typography of the L2 from the L1, whether of form such as quotation marks or of use such as capitals, have to be learnt.

5.4. The Writing System and Language Teaching

Focusing Questions

- How important do you think writing system issues are for the teacher?
- Do you think students of English should be taught British or American styles of spelling?

So what should the language teacher do about teaching the writing system? Mostly this vital and complex area has been virtually ignored by teachers and coursebook writers.

One possibility is to exploit the two routes, both the lexical route and the phonological route. Most high frequency words in English are stored as wholes and not treated by the correspondence rules. So the best course of action may be to check whether the students know how to spell the most frequent words and the most often mis-spelt words by getting them to memorise and practise the words they don't know as one-off items—'there/their', etc. Eliminating mistakes with a few hundred words would wipe out most of the glaring mistakes in students' work. For instance the verbs that FCE students made most mistakes with were forms of 'choose', 'study', 'travel', 'develop', 'begin' and 'plan'. This could simply be dealt with on a one-off basis or it could be related to the rules for consonant doubling, *not* changing <y> to <i> and so on. Certainly students have to learn many idiosyncratic words as wholes, whether high frequency words such as 'of' /ɒv/ and 'there' /ðɛə/ or lower frequency oddities such as 'sandwich' /sæmwɪdʒ/ or place-names 'Edinburgh' /edɪmbɹə/. Again there is little that students can do other than memorise these words individually; there is no point in trying to relate them to spelling rules.

Many student mistakes relate to their L1 writing system. Arabic speakers reveal the syllable structure of Arabic, not just in their pronunciation, but also in their use of written vowels as in 'punishment'. The Greek tendency to substitute one consonant for another as in <d> for <t> in 'Grade Britain' is due to the phonology of Greek. Japanese difficulties with spoken /l/ and /r/ extend to spelling, as in 'grob'al' ('global') and 'brack' ('black'). Inevitably teachers need to pay attention to L1 specific spelling problems, caused by the phonological system and the spelling of the students' first languages, directly by explaining to students the link between spelling and their L1 phonology and writing system, indirectly by practicing their typical errors.

Box 5.11 American or British Style of Spelling?

		American	British
1	color	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2	theatre	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3	catalyze	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4	labor	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5	travelling	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6	moustache	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7	dialogue	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8	molt	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9	sulphur	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10	vigour	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11	skeptic	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12	catalog	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

American: 1, 3, 4, 8, 11, 12
British: 2, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10

Other mistakes reflect the complexity of the rules of English spelling for natives and non-natives alike. Indeed one piece of research found that English children learning German made fewer spelling mistakes in German than in English (Downing, 1973). Both natives and L2 learners have particular problems with consonant doubling. <l> is wrongly doubled by both groups, as in 'controll', 'allready', 'carefull' and 'propell', the first two being from L2 learners, the second two from natives; <l> is also left out of doubled <l> as in 'filed' for 'filled' (L2 user) and 'modeled' (native speaker). Vowels are substituted for each other, for example in word endings with '-an' or '-en', such as 'frequently', 'relevent', 'appearence' and 'importent', with '-el' or '-al' as in 'hostal', 'leval' and 'fossal', and with '-ate' as in 'definitely' and 'definetely'. The choice in general amounts to explaining rules directly, safe if the teacher has a grasp of the descriptive rules of spelling beyond the school tradition, or to carrying out specific practice with spelling rules.

The discussion of pronunciation in Chapter 4 raises the issue of which accent to use as a model. For English the choice in spelling comes down to British style or North American style. Box 5.11 tests which style people use; a fuller version is online (available at <http://www.viviancook.uk/SLLandLT/SLL<5thed.html>). Mostly the differences of American English style from British style come down to Noah Webster's decision to emphasise US identity when he chose spellings for the first edition of his dictionary in 1828. The main differences are:

- <-er> versus <-re>: American 'center', 'theater', 'fiber' versus British 'centre', 'theatre', 'fibre'
- <-or> versus <-our>: American 'labor', 'color', 'neighbor' versus British 'labour', 'colour', 'neighbour'
- <-ize> versus <-ise>: American 'realize', 'recognize', 'organize', versus British 'realise', 'recognise', 'organise'

In many cases British style has two spellings for a word, often with different meanings—'meter/metre', 'kerb/curb', 'program/programme'—where American style has one. There is also variation between the conventions adopted by particular publishers, say over <-ise>~<-ize> in words like 'socialise'.

The American/British divide in spelling affects most countries in the world that use English. For example Australia uses both British 'labour' and American 'labor' in different contexts; Canada laid down the spelling 'colour' by Order-in-Council in 1890. Yet the number of words that differ between the two styles is a handful compared to the totality of the language. The choice of which style to teach usually comes down to overall attitudes towards British and American culture within a particular educational setting. And any computer spell-checker will soon alert you if you are not conforming to a particular spelling style.

Spelling is hardly ever covered systematically in language teaching, vital as it may be to the students' needs. The extent of the help in the beginners book *Changes* (Richards, 1998) is practising names for letters and occasional advice such as 'Listen and practice. Notice the spelling'. Little specific teaching of the writing system appears in main coursebooks. *English Unlimited* (Doff, 2010) does, however, have a few useful boxes on 'Sounds and Spelling', for example

/e/ and /i/ spelled as <e>, <ee> or <ea> (p. 33). Some books for native speakers such as *Test Your Spelling* (Parker, 1994) and *Handling Spelling* (Davis, 1985) go slightly beyond this and liven up what can be a boring topic with cartoons and quizzes. But none incorporate the basic insights about the sound and visual routes in spelling, about mistakes specific to particular first languages and about the actual rules of spelling. None for example mention the most obvious rule of English, the three letter rule. For the only true materials teaching spelling to English students, one needs to go to *Teaching Spelling* (Stirling, 2011) with a thoroughly worked description of spelling and spelling teaching techniques, and its backup website (<http://thespellingblog.blogspot.co.uk/>).

The official syllabuses for teaching language do nowadays tend to make some gesture towards teaching the writing system. The Malaysian Year 1 syllabus (Pusat Perkembangan Kurikulum, 2003) for instance specifies mastering 'the mechanics of writing so that they form their letters well,' and learning 'individual **letter sounds** of the alphabet'. However, useful as the names of the letters are for all sorts of language tasks, they are highly misleading as a guide to their correspondences in speech, as the Vowel Correspondence rules above show. Indeed some of the letter-names vary from place to place. <z> is /zi:/ in American (but not Canadian) style and /zed/ in British style. The name for the letter <h> is becoming /heitʃ/ rather than /eitʃ/; children on a television game called *Hard Spell* were penalised for spelling words wrong but allowed to get away with saying /heitʃ/, previously considered an uneducated variant. Sticking to letters, the Common European Framework (2008) goes so far as to mention the need to recognise the difference between 'printed and cursive forms in both upper and lower case' i.e. <a>, <a>, <A> and <A>.

While in general these syllabuses make a start, they reflect common sense more than ideas about how people use and acquire writing systems. Box 5.12 gives the parts that concern spelling that I could find in the Adult ESOL Core Curriculum (1999).

Box 5.12 Adult ESOL Core Curriculum: Spelling (Extracted)

An adult will be expected to:

Entry Level 1	Entry Level 2	Entry Level 3
spell correctly some personal key words and familiar words	spell correctly the majority of personal details and familiar common words	spell correctly common words and relevant key words for work and special interest
write the letters of the alphabet, using upper case	produce legible text and lower case	proofread and correct writing
produce legible text for grammar and spelling		

The word ‘correctly’ appears in each level, the students being expected to go from correct spelling of ‘personal key words’ at level 1 to ‘familiar common words’ at level 2 to ‘relevant key words’ at level 3; i.e. the curriculum is dominated by the meaning-based one-word-at-a-time route with no use of spelling rules. The other strand is an emphasis on legibility and proofreading. But that’s all that is said about a major component of English. This is not a curriculum that pays any attention to the massive work done on the English writing system in the past few years.

Box 5.13 Writing Systems and Teaching

Teachers need to teach:

- the type of writing system, direction, letter-formation etc to students whose first writing system is different.
- the rules and orthographic regularities of spelling.
- the punctuation and capitalisation rules.
- individual spellings of frequent words and of frequently misspelled words.

Discussion Topics

- 1 How much attention should writing system topics receive in language teaching?
- 2 To what extent are people’s problems with English spelling due to English or their first language?
- 3 Are spelling problems in English worse or better than those in another language you know?
- 4 How much do you care about proper spelling rather than proper pronunciation?
- 5 How should examinations and tests accommodate mistakes with the writing system?
- 6 Do you prefer a British or American style of spelling? Why?

Further Reading

The background on writing systems can be found in books like Coulmas (1996), *The Blackwell Encyclopaedia of Writing Systems*; an overview of English is in my (2004) *The English Writing System*, on which the current chapter draws, particularly for punctuation. A larger survey is in Cook and Ryan (eds.) (2016) *The Routledge Handbook of the English Writing System*. There is

a separate set of pages on the writing system on my site at <http://www.viviancook.uk/SLLandLT/SLL<5thed.html>. The details of English spelling can be found in Carney (1994), *A Survey of English Spelling*, and Venezky (1999), *The American Way of Spelling*. L2 writing systems are described in Cook and Bassetti (2005), *Second Language Writing Systems*. A light-hearted book with a serious spelling core is my own *Accommodating Broccoli in the Cemetery* (Cook, 2004a).

Box 5.14 *The Pickwick Papers* without *e* (from Exercise in Box 5.2)

ThX first ray of light which illuminXs thX gloom, and convXrts into a dazzling brilliancy that obscurity in which thX XarliXr history of thX public carXXr of thX immortal Pickwick would appXar to bX involvXd, is dXrivXd from thX pXrusal of thX following Xntry in thX Transactions of thX Pickwick Club, which thX Xditor of thXsX papXrs fXXls thX highXst plXasurX in laying bXforX his rXadXrs, as a proof of thX carXful attXntion, indXfatigablX assiduity, and nicX discrimination, with which his sXarch among thX multifarious documXnts confidXd to him has bXXn conductXd.

Total: 50 <e>s, 13 <the>s

Box 5.15 Sample Punctuation Sentence (from Exercise in Box 5.9)

Now of old the name of that forest
was Greenwood the Great, and its
wide halls and aisles were the haunt
of many beasts and of birds of bright
song; and there was the realm of
King Thranduil under the oak and
the beech. But, after many years,
when well nigh a third of that age of
the world had passed, a darkness
crept slowly through the wood from
the southward, and fear walked there
in shadowy glades; fell beasts came
hunting, and cruel and evil creatures
laid there their snares.

J.R.R. Tolkien (1977), *The Silmarillion*

Key Terms about Writing

character: a character is used both as a general term for any symbol that appears in a writing system (including wordspace) and for the symbols in the Chinese and Japanese writing systems such as 人 ('person').

consonant doubling, like <ll> 'will' or <nn> 'sunny', is often used to show that the preceding vowel is 'short/closed', e.g. 'hopping/hoping'. There are slight differences over doubling in British and American style, e.g. 'travelling' versus 'traveling'.

correspondence rules: the rules in sound-based writing systems for connecting sounds to letters, i.e. the English phoneme /ei/ to the letter <a> and vice versa <a> to /æ/, etc.

direction: some writing systems go from left to right like English, some from right to left like Arabic and Hebrew. Older forms of Chinese and Japanese are written in columns from top to bottom.

font: strictly a complete set of type for printing, nowadays mostly referring to a particular design for the whole set of characters available through a computer keyboard, called by typographers a *typeface*.

grapheme: a grapheme is 'any minimal letter string used in correspondences' (Carney, 1994, p. xxvii), i.e. one letter or more acting as unit to relate to sounds.

Box 5.16 English Consonant Graphemes (Brooks, 2015, pp. 255–257)

Main System

b bb c ce ch ci ck d dd dg dge ed f ff g ge gg h j k l le ll m mm n ng nn
p ph pp q r rr s se sh si ss ssi t tch th ti tt v ve w wh x y z zz

Others

bh bd bp bt bu bv + 189 more

letter/sound correspondences: in sound-based scripts, written symbols like letters correspond to sounds of the spoken language, sometimes simply as in 'phonetic' scripts like Italian, sometimes in complex and indirect ways as in English.

meaning-based writing system: a form of writing in which the written sign (character) connects directly to the meaning, as in Chinese characters.

orthographic regularities: rules that govern how letters behave in English, such as <ck> corresponding to /k/ occurring at the ends of syllables 'back', <c> at the beginning 'cab'.

- punctuation:** 'the rules for graphically structuring written language by means of a set of conventional marks' (Coulmas, 1996, p. 421). Punctuation consists of the use of additional marks like <;, ?> either to show the structure of the sentence or help with reading aloud.
- routes:** reading may follow the sound-based route or the lexical route. While languages tend to prefer one or the other, individuals may switch constantly between them.
- script:** a script is the actual physical symbols of the writing system, for instance Roman or Cyrillic alphabets.
- silent letter:** a letter that does not correspond directly to a speech sound but often has indirect effects, e.g. silent <e> 'fat' versus 'fate', and silent <u> 'guess' versus 'gesture'.
- sound-based writing system:** a form of writing in which the written sign connects to speech, whether through syllables (Japanese), consonants alone (Arabic, Hebrew) or both vowels and consonants (alphabetic languages like Greek, Urdu or English).
- transparency:** a writing system in which each symbol corresponds to a particular sound of the language, and, vice versa, each sound corresponds to a symbol, is called 'transparent' or 'shallow'.
- writing system:** a writing system 'determines in a general way how written units connect with units of language' (Perfetti, 1999, p. 168).

6 Strategies for Communicating and Learning

Most of the time teachers think they know best: they make the students carry out various activities; they select the language they are going to hear or read, the tasks they are going to do; they prescribe the language they should produce, all hopefully in their best interests. But, as human beings, students have minds of their own; ultimately they decide how they are going to tackle the tasks of the classroom and achieve the goals of their learning. Sometimes their choices are visible to us—they put electronic dictionaries on their desks—sometimes they are invisible decisions in their privacy of their own heads—they work out translations in their minds. This independence of the learner from the teacher has been recognised by the tradition of strategies research, which looks at the choices that students are making and how they can be reflected in language teaching.

Of course there are extreme methodological problems with this, as Ernesto Macaro (2006) has shown. Measuring the invisible contents of the mind has always been difficult. One way is to ask people what they think they are doing—‘How do you try to remember new vocabulary?’ The answer, however, may not accurately reflect what they actually do since so much of our language behaviour is subconscious and not available to our conscious minds; imagine asking a five-year-old ‘How do you learn new words?’; the answer would be meaningless and bear no connection to how the child is really learning vocabulary. Yet the child probably has a bigger vocabulary than most L2 students. Introspection is a potentially suspect source of evidence.

Another way of investigating strategies is to look for external signs of behaviour; does a student sit at the back of the class or are they always the first to ask a question? What does this show about them? The problem with this as research evidence is interpretation; we have to connect what the student appears to be doing with some process in their minds, an extremely difficult feat scientifically: is a silent student someone who is bored, deep in concentration or naturally shy? And we have to observe their behaviour in a consistent way so that someone else would make the same deduction from it. Of course we could ask students what is going through their minds but then we are back to introspection.

A third way is get the students to carry out a specific task and to see what language they produce: ‘Describe this picture to someone over the phone’.

While this should yield clear linguistic evidence, the technique is limited to strategies visible from language production; many powerful strategies may have no obvious immediate linguistic consequences. Furthermore it is open to the objection that the results may not tell us anything about the real learning or using situations that the students encounter.

These doubts should be borne in mind when looking at strategies research and may well be insoluble: exploring the private world of people's minds is a problem for any research. For this and other reasons there seems to have been a lull in strategies research in the last decade. Nevertheless potentially strategies research leads to interesting results for language teaching, as we shall see. This chapter looks at strategies for communication and for learning; vocabulary strategies are dealt with in Chapter 3.

6.1. Communication Strategies

Focusing Questions

- How would you explain to someone the type of nut you need to repair your car? Would your strategy be different in your first or second language?
- Should students have to talk about things for which they do not know the words or should they always have the vocabulary available to them?

Keywords

The various types of strategy are glossed at the end of the chapter.

L2 learners are attempting to communicate through a language that is not their own. L2 learning differs from L1 learning because mental and social development go hand in hand with language development in the L1 child's life. Hence, unlike L1 children, L2 learners are always wanting to express things for which they do not have the means in the second language; they know there are things they can't say, while L1 children don't have this self-awareness. First we look at three different approaches to communication strategies. The detailed lists of strategies used by these approaches are summarised in Box 6.3, which can be referred to during this section.

Communication Strategies as Social Interaction

Elaine Tarone (1980) emphasises social aspects of communication. Both participants in a conversation are trying to overcome their lack of shared meaning. She sees three overall types of strategy: communication, production and learning, the first of which we will consider here. When things go wrong, both participants try to devise a communication strategy to get out of the difficulty.

One type of strategy is to **paraphrase** what you want to say. Typical strategies are:

- *Approximation.* Someone who is groping for a word falls back on a strategy of using a word that means approximately the same, say 'animal' for 'horse', because the listener will be able to deduce what is intended from the context.
- *Word coinage.* Another form of paraphrase is to make up a word to substitute for the unknown word—'airball' for 'balloon'.
- *Circumlocution.* L2 learners talk their way round the word—'when you make a container' for 'pottery'.

All these strategies rely on the speaker trying to solve the difficulty through the second language.

A second overall type of communication strategy is to fall back on the first language, known as transfer. Examples are:

- *Translation from the L1.* A German-speaking student says 'Make the door shut' rather than 'Shut the door', falling back on a German word order.
- *Language switch.* 'That's a nice tirtil' (caterpillar). This consists of simply saying the L1 word and praying that it is comprehensible in the L2. This is distinct from codeswitching because the listener does not know the L1.
- *Appeal for assistance.* 'What is this?'
- *Mime what you need.* My daughter succeeded in getting some candles in a shop in France by singing 'Happy Birthday' in English and miming blowing out candles.

A third overall type of strategy is **avoidance**: do not talk about things you know are difficult to express in the second language, whether whole topics or individual words.

Ellen Bialystok (1990) compared the effectiveness of some of these strategies and found that listeners understand word coinage more than approximation, circumlocution or language switch, though, in terms of sheer frequency, word coinage was very rare, the commonest strategy being circumlocution.

These types of strategy are particularly important to the teacher who is aiming to teach some form of social interaction to the students. If they are to succeed in conversing with other people through the second language, they need to practise the art of conducting conversations in which they are not capable of saying everything they want to. This contrasts with some older language teaching techniques which tried to ensure that the students never found themselves doing anything they had not been taught. The ability to repair the conversation when things go wrong is vital to using the second language. Maximally the suggestion would be that the teacher specifically teaches the strategies rather than letting them emerge out of the students' own attempts. In this case there would be specific exercises on approximation

or word coinage, say, before the students had to put them together in a real conversation.

Communication Strategies as Psychological Problem-Solving

The approach of Faerch and Kasper (1984) concentrates on the psychological dimension of what is going on in the L2 speaker's mind. L2 learners want to express something through the second language; they make a plan for how to do it but they encounter a hitch. To get round this psychological difficulty, they resort to communication strategies. Faerch and Kasper divide these into two main groups: achievement (trying to solve the problem) and avoidance (trying to avoid it).

Achievement Strategies

These subdivide into *cooperative* strategies, such as appealing to the other person for help, which are mostly similar to Tarone's list, and *non-cooperative* strategies, where the learner tries to solve the problems without recourse to others. One form of non-cooperation is to fall back on the first language when in trouble by:

- *Codeswitching*. The speaker skips language—'Do you want to have some ah Zinsen?' (the German word for 'interest').
- *Foreignerization*. A Dane literally translating the Danish word for vegetables into English as 'green things'.

These strategies seem likely to occur when the listener knows both languages, as in many situations where codeswitching takes place.

Another overall grouping is interlanguage strategies based on the learner's evolving L2 system rather than on the L1. Among these Faerch and Kasper include:

- *Substitution*. Speakers substitute one word for another, say 'if' for 'whether' if they cannot remember whether 'whether' has an 'h'.
- *Generalisation*. L2 speakers use a more general word rather than a more particular one, such as 'animal' for 'rabbit', i.e. shifting up from the basic level of vocabulary described in Chapter 3 to the superordinate.
- *Description*. Speakers cannot remember the word for 'kettle' and so describe it as 'the thing to cook water in'.
- *Exemplification*. Speakers give an example rather than the general term, such as 'cars' for 'transport', i.e. shift down a level.
- *Word-coinage*. That is, making up a word when a speaker does not know it, such as inventing an imaginary French word 'heurot' for 'watch'.
- *Restructuring*. The speaker has another attempt at the same sentence, as in a learner struggling to find the rare English word 'sibling': 'I have two—er—one sister and one brother'.

Avoidance Strategies

These Faerch and Kasper divide into:

- *Formal avoidance*. The speaker avoids a particular linguistic form, whether in pronunciation, in morphemes, or in syntax.
- *Functional avoidance*. The speaker avoids different types of function.

Again this approach in general reminds the teacher of the processes going on in the students' minds when they are trying to speak in a new language. Practice with communication techniques such as information gap games forces the students to use these types of communication strategy, whether they want to or not, provided that they have to say things that are just beyond their current level of functioning in the second language.

Compensatory Strategies

To some extent Tarone's social communicative strategies and Faerch and Kasper's psychological strategies are complementary ways of coping with the problems of communicating in a second language. But, as we have seen, they end up as rather long and confusing lists. Eric Kellerman and his colleagues (1987) felt that these approaches could be considerably simplified. The common factor to all communication strategies is that the L2 learner has to deal with not knowing a word in a second language; it is lack of vocabulary that is crucial. The strategies exist to plug gaps in the learners' vocabulary by allowing them to refer to things for which they do not know the L2 words; a better name is then **compensatory strategies**—L2 learners are always having to compensate for the limited vocabulary at their disposal.

Nanda Poulisse (1990) set up an experiment in which Dutch learners of English had to carry out tasks such as retelling stories and describing geometrical

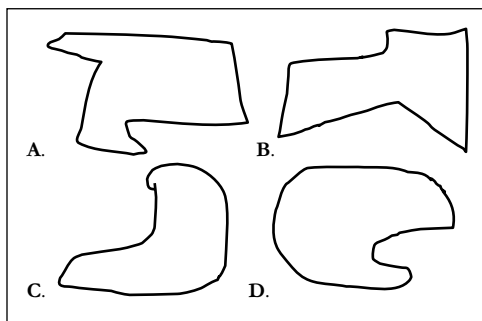


Figure 6.1 Test of communication strategies: Describe either (i) A or B or (ii) C or D in writing so that other people could distinguish it from the other member of the pair (without of course being told 'left' or 'right'). Then check against the types of strategies on Box 6.3. Some examples of students' responses are given in Box 6.1.

shapes. She ended up with a new division of strategies into two main types, called archistrategies, each with two sub-divisions, according to the way that they coped with words they did not know.

Conceptual Archistrategy

This involved solving the problem by thinking of the meaning of the word and attempting to convey it in another way:

- *Analytic strategy.* In this the learner tries to break the meaning of the word up into parts and then to convey the parts separately: so a student searching for the word 'parrot' says 'talk uh bird', taking the two parts 'bird that talks'.
- *Holistic strategy.* Here the learner thinks of the meaning of the word as a whole and tries to use a word that is the closest approximation; for example, seeking for the word 'desk', a student produces 'table', which captures all the salient features of 'desk' apart from the fact it is specifically for writing at.

Linguistic Archistrategy

Here the students fall back on the language resources inside their head such as:

- *Morphological creativity.* One possibility is to make up a word using proper endings and hope that it works; for instance, trying to describe the act of 'ironing', the student came up with the word 'ironize'.
- *L1 transfer.* The students also have a first language on tap. It is possible for them to transfer a word from the first to the second language, hoping that it is going to exist in the new language. Thus a Dutch student trying to say 'waist' produces 'middle'—the Dutch word is in fact 'middel'. Indeed this may be transfer from another language: once I couldn't remember the word for holidays in French 'vacances' and produced the German word 'ferien'.

Box 6.1 Student Responses to the Shapes in the Communication Strategies Test (Figure 6.1)

Looks like arrow
 Left-hand to show letter c
 7 angles, rectangular top left and bottom right some parts eliminated;
 looks like an ox
 Kidney shape
 Looks like a seal without eyes
 7 lines
 Nine angles; bottom looks like a foot

This approach led, however, to an interesting conclusion. The linguistic transfer strategy requires knowledge of another language and hence is unique to L2 learning. However, the conceptual strategies are the same as those used in native speech when speakers cannot remember the word they want to use. Describing which parts of my car needed repairing to a mechanic, I said, 'There's oil dripping from that sort of junction in the pipe behind the engine', an analytic strategy. This not only allowed me to communicate without knowing the correct words; it also means I never need to learn them—I still do not know what this part of the car is called and never will. Such strategies occur more frequently in the speech of L2 learners' only because they know fewer words than native speakers. The strategies are used by native speakers in the same way as L2 learners when they too do not know the words, as any conversation overheard in a shop selling do-it-yourself tools will confirm. Kellerman and his colleagues believe that these compensatory strategies are a part of the speaker's communicative competence that can be used in either language when needed rather than something peculiar to L2 learning (Kellerman et al., 1990). Poulisse indeed showed that people preferred the same type of strategy when they were faced with finding a word they did not know in both the first and the second language; the only difference is that this situation arises far more frequently in a second language!

So it is not clear that compensatory strategies need to be taught. L2 learners resort to these strategies in the situation outside the classroom when they do not know words. This does not mean that it may not be beneficial for students to have their attention drawn to them so that they are reminded that these strategies can indeed be used in a second language; however Yasuo Nakatani (2012) has shown that explicit discussion and presentation of communication strategies to Japanese students within a Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) framework led to improvement in their spoken ability.

Such strategies in a sense form part of the normal repertoire of the students' communicative competence. In any teaching activity that encourages the learners to speak outside their normal vocabulary range, they are bound to occur. An exercise in *Keep Talking* (Klippel, 1984) suggests that the students describe their everyday problems such as losing their keys and not being able to remember names, and other students suggest ways of solving them. If the students do not know the word for 'key', say, they might ask the teacher (a cooperative strategy), or look it up in a dictionary (a non-cooperative strategy). Or they might attempt an analytical archistrategy: 'the thing you open doors with'.

To give some idea of what students actually do, look at the transcript of a conversation in the box below. Are the strategies we have described actually being used and how important are they to their interaction?

Box 6.2 Transcript of Students Doing an Information Gap Exercise

M is a stranger asking the way round Oxford; W is the local providing help from a map.

- 1) W: I want to go er I am en smallest street called Merton Street and I want to visit the Rege Readerculf er ca Camera.
- 2) M: You are in?
- 3) W: Yes please.
- 4) M: Merton College, you said?
- 5) W: Yeah called Merton Street.
- 6) M: Merton Street.
- 7) W: Yes please.
- 8) W: And you are going to?
- 9) W: To visit the Redcliffe Camera.
- 10) M: The?
- 11) W: Camera yeah.
- 12) M: Can you spell it?
- 13) W: R A D C L I Double F E Camera.
- 14) M: Radcliffe yes, Radcliffe camera, it's number 4. And you are?
- 15) W: In um a small street called Merton Street.
- 16) M: Called Merton.
- 17) W: Yeah Merton Street.
- 18) M: You are here. Merton Street.
- 19) W: Yes.
- 20) M: Yes. And er Radcliffe camera is I can't say (Long pause). Sorry. You must to ask another people.
- 21) W: It doesn't matter.
- 22) M: 'cos I don't know.

With the exception of dictionary use, most of the communication strategies that have been listed can be safely ignored by the teacher. They are there if the students need them but they need not form the teaching point of an exercise. One danger with teaching activities that make the students communicate spontaneously is that sheer lack of vocabulary forces the students back onto these strategies, as we see in the transcript. Hence the teacher should keep the likely vocabulary load of non-teacher-controlled activities within certain limits, ensuring that students already know enough of the vocabulary not to be forced back onto compensatory strategies for too much of the time. Or the teachers can treat them as ways of discovering and teaching the vocabulary the students lack. Further discussion of the teaching of strategies in general occurs in the next section.

Box 6.3 Different Approaches to L2 Communication Strategies

Socially motivated strategies for solving mutual lack of understanding (Tarone, 1980):

- paraphrase (approximation, word coinage, circumlocution)
- falling back on L1 translation, language switch, appeal for assistance, mime
- avoidance

Psychologically motivated strategies for solving the individual's L2 problems of expression (Faerch and Kasper, 1984):

1 Achievement strategies:

- cooperative strategies (similar to list above)
- non-cooperative strategies
- codeswitching
- foreignerization
- interlanguage strategies (substitution, generalization, description, exemplification, word-coining, restructuring)

2 Avoidance strategies:

- formal (phonological, morphological, grammatical)
- functional (actional, propositional, modal)

Archistrategies to compensate for lack of vocabulary (Poullisse, 1990):

- conceptual analytic (breaks the meaning of the word down)
- conceptual holistic (tries for a word that is closest overall in meaning)
- linguistic morphological creativity (makes up a new word by adding an appropriate ending)
- linguistic transfer (uses a word from the first language instead)

Box 6.4 Communication Strategies and Language Teaching

- Communication strategies are a natural part of conversational interaction that people fall back on when they have difficulty in getting things across.
- Students mostly fall back on the first language strategies and so teaching can heighten students' awareness of which of their natural strategies are useful in a second language.

6.2. Learning Strategies: How Do Learners Vary in Their Approaches to L2 Learning?

Focusing Questions

When you are learning another language, what special ways do you use for:

- pronunciation?
- getting meanings from contexts?
- making oral presentations?
- using the language socially outside the classroom?

The choices for using the language made by the student (communication strategies) can logically be separated from the choices that the student makes about learning the language (learning strategies). This section looks at the learning strategies used by L2 learners. As with communication strategies, there is considerable difficulty in investigating these invisible strategies, both introspectively for the same reasons that the students may not be consciously aware of them or able to verbalise them adequately, and objectively as it is unclear what the visible effects on their behaviour might be. This means there is little consensus among researchers about the definition of learning strategies; a useful version is 'steps taken by the learner to make language learning more successful, self-directed and enjoyable' (Oxford, 1990). A list of learning strategies is given on Box 6.11.

Box 6.5 A Chinese Student's Learning Strategy

I have a 'skill' that makes me remember vocabularies and sentences easily. Because I just learned the English in my primary school and this language is new for me, sometimes I cannot remember the correct pronunciation and I just mark these English in Chinese. When I talked about it with my friends, they told me they have the same behaviour. This method is learning L2 based on L1 and it is helpful for us. But the negative effect caused by this leads to a bad pronunciation habit and it made an effect on my English learning process indeed.

Good Language Learner Strategies

The starting point for researchers was to consider how people who are good at languages might tackle L2 learning in different ways from those who are not so good or whether they might behave in the same way but more efficiently. Once we know what the good classroom L2 learners do then our teaching can encourage the rest of the students to do the same. One interesting theme is the good language learner (GLL) strategies. Naiman et al. (1978, reprinted 1995) tried to see what good language learners had in common. They found six broad strategies shared by GLLs.

GLL Strategy 1: Find a Learning Style That Suits You

Good language learners become aware of the type of L2 learning that suits them best. Though they conform to the teaching situation to start with, they soon find ways of adapting or modifying it to suit themselves. Thus some GLLs supplement audiolingual or communicative language teaching by reading grammar books at home, if that is their preference. Others seek out communicative encounters to help them compensate for a classroom with an academic emphasis.

GLL Strategy 2: Involve Yourself in the Language Learning Process

GLLs do not passively accept what is presented to them but go out to meet it. They participate more in the classroom, whether visibly or not. They take the initiative and devise situations and language learning techniques for themselves. Some listen to the news in the second language on the radio; others go to see L2 films.

GLL Strategy 3: Develop an Awareness of Language Both as System and as Communication

GLLs are conscious not only that language is a complex system of rules but also that it is used for a purpose; they combine grammatical and pragmatic competence. In other words GLLs do not treat language solely as communication or as academic knowledge but as *both*. While many learn lists of vocabulary consciously, many also seek out opportunities to take part in conversations in the second language, one Canadian even driving a lorry for the L2 opportunities it yielded.

GLL Strategy 4: Pay Constant Attention to Expanding Your Language Knowledge

GLLs are not content with their knowledge of a second language but are always trying to improve it. They make guesses about things they do not know, they check whether they are right or wrong by comparing their speech with the new language they hear, and they ask native speakers to correct them. Some are continually on the lookout for clues to the second language.

GLL Strategy 5: Develop the Second Language as a Separate System

GLLs try to develop their knowledge of the second language in its own right and eventually to think in it. They do not relate everything to their first language but make the second language a separate system. One common strategy is to engage in silent monologues to practise the second language. I have sometimes told students to give silent running commentaries in the second language to themselves about the passing scene, say as they travel on a bus.

GLL Strategy 6: Take into Account the Demands That L2 Learning Imposes

GLLs realise that L2 learning can be very demanding. It seems as if you are taking on a new personality in the second language, and one which you do

not particularly care for. It is painful to expose yourself in the L2 classroom by making foolish mistakes. The GLL perseveres in spite of these emotional handicaps. 'You've got to be able to laugh at your mistakes,' said one.

Osamu Takeuchi (2003) took a different approach to finding out the strategies of good learners by analysing books in which 160 Japanese speakers described how they had successfully learnt another language. One finding is that, to Japanese, it is particularly important to immerse themselves in the new language, 'pushing' themselves into the new language as often and as hard as possible.

Some qualifications need to be made to this line of research. First of all it only describes what GLLs are aware of; this is what they say they do rather than what they actually do—introspective evidence. The magic ingredient in their L2 learning may be something they are unaware of, and hence cannot emerge from interviews or autobiographies. Second, the strategies are similar to what teachers already supposed to be the case, i.e. the research states the obvious. This is partly a limitation of the original research. Most of the GLLs studied were highly educated people working in education, probably rather similar to the readers of this book. The strategies are familiar because we are looking at ourselves in a mirror. As with aptitude, there may be an alternative set of strategies employed in natural settings by people who are non-academic GLLs. Third, as Steve McDonough (1995) points out, the GLL strategies are not so much strategies in the sense of a deliberate approach to solve problems as 'wholesome attitudes' that good learners have towards language learning. Macaro (2006) reinforces this by pointing out that the initial question whether GLLs have better strategies than weaker students or are better at using the same strategies is still unresolved.

Types of Learning Strategies

It seemed then that we needed deeper information about what strategies people are using to learn language than these self-reported retrospective accounts of conscious behaviour. O'Malley and Chamot (1990) looked at learning strategies within an overall model of L2 learning based on cognitive psychology. A full list of their strategies is online at <http://www.viviancook.uk/SLLandLT/SLL<5thed.html>. They defined three main types of strategy used by L2 students:

- 1 *Metacognitive strategies* involve planning and thinking about learning, such as planning one's learning, monitoring one's own speech or writing, and evaluating how well one has done.
- 2 *Cognitive strategies* involve conscious ways of tackling learning, such as note-taking, resourcing (using dictionaries and other resources), and elaboration (relating new information to old).
- 3 *Social strategies* mean learning by interacting with others, such as working with fellow students or asking the teacher's help.

They found that cognitive strategies accounted for the majority of those reported by ESL students, namely 53%, the most important being *advanced*

preparation—as one student put it, ‘You review before you go into class’—and *self-management*, ‘I sit in the front of the class so I can see the teacher’s face clearly’ (O’Malley et al., 1985). Metacognitive strategies accounted for 30%, the most important being self-management and advance preparation. Social strategies made up the remaining 17%, consisting about equally of cooperative efforts to work with other students and of questions to check understanding. The type of strategy varies according to the task the students are engaged in (O’Malley and Chamot, 1990). A vocabulary task calls forth the metacognitive strategies of self-monitoring and self-evaluation and the cognitive strategies of resourcing and elaboration. A listening task leads to the metacognitive strategies of selective attention and problem identification as well as self-monitoring, and to the cognitive strategies of note-taking, inferencing and summarising as well as elaboration. The use of strategies also varied according to level: intermediate students used slightly fewer strategies in total but proportionately more metacognitive strategies.

The most influential research on learning strategies is that carried out by Rebecca Oxford. In 1990 she published a method for finding out the strategies used by learners called the *Strategy Inventory for Language Learning* (SILL). The SILL turned into a benchmark for strategies research for many years, was used in many circumstances around the world and still forms the basis for many an MA thesis. SILL asks the student to rate 50 statements such as:

I think of relationships between what I already know and new things I learn in English.

on a scale going from (1) ‘Never true of me’, to (5) ‘Always true of me’. It includes between six and eighteen items for six broad classes of strategies, divided into Direct and Indirect. Examples are provided on the webpage <http://www.viviancook.uk/SLLandLT/SLL<5thed.html>.

Box 6.6 Claims from Learning Strategy Research (Macaro, 2006)

- 1 Strategy use appears to correlate with various aspects of language learning success.
- 2 There are group differences and individual differences in learner strategy use.
- 3 The methodology for eliciting learner strategy use, although imperfect, is at an acceptable level of validity and reliability.
- 4 Despite some setbacks . . . and some reservations . . . learner strategy instruction (or ‘training’) appears to be successful if it is carried out over lengthy periods of time and if it includes a focus on metacognition.

Direct

- A. *Memory strategies*: remembering more effectively, say by visualising the spelling of a new word in your mind.
- B. *Cognitive strategies*: using all your mental processes for instance by looking for patterns in the new language.
- C. *Compensation strategies*: compensating for missing knowledge, say by trying to anticipate what the other person is going to say next.

Indirect

- D. *Metacognitive strategies*: organising and evaluating your knowledge, for example by preparing what is going to come in the next class in advance.
- E. *Affective strategies*: managing your emotions by say trying to relax when speaking.
- F. *Social strategies*: learning with others, by for instance asking the other person to slow down.

Oxford originally used the SILL mostly as an aid to teachers in evaluating what their students were actually doing and in developing teaching methods. Since then SILL has been used to study students in a variety of situations in different parts of the world. The research has been assessed by Ernesto Macaro (2006; 2010); his summary is displayed in the box alongside Box 6.6. This makes it apparent that we have to exercise caution in applying strategies research: it can show some benefits but there is great variation between learners in the strategies they use and in the extent to which teaching them is of benefit.

Box 6.7 Language Learning Strategies

The good language learner (GLL) strategies (Naiman et al., 1978, reprinted 1995):

- 1 Find a learning style that suits you.
- 2 Involve yourself in the language learning process.
- 3 Develop an awareness of language both as system and as communication.
- 4 Pay constant attention to expanding your language.
- 5 Develop the second language as a separate system.
- 6 Take into account the demands that L2 learning imposes.

Learning strategies (O'Malley and Chamot, 1990):

- Metacognitive strategies: planning learning, monitoring your own speech, self-evaluation, etc.
- Cognitive strategies: note-taking, resourcing, elaboration, etc.
- Social strategies: working with fellow students or asking the teacher's help.

Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) (Oxford, 1990):

- A remembering more effectively
- B using all your mental processes
- C compensating for missing knowledge
- D organising and evaluating your knowledge
- E managing your emotions
- F learning with others

Learning Strategies and Language Teaching

How can teachers make use of learning strategies? The chief moral is that the students often know best, not the teachers. It is the learners' involvement, the learners' strategies, and the learners' ability to go their own ways that count, regardless of what the teacher is trying to do. Poor students are those who depend most on the teacher and are least able to fend for themselves. The students must be encouraged to develop independence inside and outside the classroom. Partly this can be achieved through 'learner training': equipping the students with the means to guide themselves by explaining strategies to them. The idea of learner-training shades over into autonomous self-directed learning, in which the students take on responsibility for their learning. They choose their goals; they control the teaching methods and materials; they assess how well they are doing themselves. This is dealt with further in Chapter 11.

It may simply not have occurred to students that they have a choice of strategies for conducting their learning. Teaching can open up their options. My intermediate course *Meeting People* (Cook, 1982) asked students to discuss four GLL strategies. The intention was to make them aware of different possibilities rather than specifically to train them in any strategy. Pre-intermediate *speakout* (2011) discusses 'The art of conversation', such as asking questions, but not talking about 'dangerous topics'. As a guide for teachers, *Language Learning Strategies* (Oxford, 1990), provides a wealth of activities to heighten

the learners' awareness of strategies and their ability to use them, for example, 'The old lady ahead of you in the bus is chastising a young man in your new language, listen to their conversation to find out exactly what she's saying to him.' Most recent coursebooks, however, sadly make very little use of the strategies concept. The student is seldom given a choice of learning strategy: the course-writer knows best. *Outcomes* (Dellar and Walkley, 2011, p. 116) does, however, have a useful exercise called 'Learner Training' which asks students to read and discuss 'these ideas about different ways of improving your English outside of class'.

Strategy-training assumes that conscious attention to learning strategies is beneficial and that the strategies are teachable. While the idea that GLLs need to 'think' in the second language may strike the students as a revelation, this does not mean they can put it into practice. They may indeed find it impossible or disturbing to try to think in the second language and so feel guilty they are not living up to the image of the GLL. For example, the GLLs studied in Canadian academia clearly had above average intelligence; less intelligent learners may not be able to use the same GLL strategies. Many strategies cannot be changed by the teacher or the learner, however good their intentions. Bialystok (1990) argues in favour of training that helps the students to be aware of strategies in general rather than that which teaches specific strategies.

O'Malley and Chamot (1990) provide some encouragement for strategy-training. They taught EFL students to listen to lectures using their three types of strategy. One group was trained in cognitive strategies, such as note-taking and social strategies, such as giving practice reports to fellow students. A second group was in addition trained in metacognitive strategies, for example, paying conscious attention to discourse markers such as 'first', 'second', and so on. A third group was not taught any strategies. The metacognitive group improved most for speaking, and did better on some, but not all, listening tasks. The cognitive group was better than the control group. Given that this experiment only lasted for eight 50-minute lessons spread over eight days, this seems as dramatic an improvement as could reasonably be expected. Training students to use particular learning strategies indeed improves their language performance. But, as O'Malley and Chamot (1990) found, teachers may need to be convinced that strategy-training is important, and may themselves need to be trained in how to teach strategies. However, to dampen excessive enthusiasm, it should be pointed out that there is still some doubt about how useful strategies really are: Oxford et al. (1990) found that Asian students of English used fewer 'good' strategies than Hispanics but improved their English more! A perpetual issue raised by Chamot (2005) and discussed below in Chapter 9 is which language the discussion of strategies should take place in. There is no intrinsic reason why this has to be in the second language; indeed beginning students may need the explanations to take place in their first language.

Box 6.8 An Arabic Student's Learning Strategy

At the age of 17, I started developing my own learning strategies using English songs and movies. After translating the words that I didn't understand in a song, I used to listen to it as many times as I can and then sing with it until I master the pronunciation of its words. As for the movies, I used to watch every movie twice, the first time with a translated subtitle and the second time with an English subtitle. This has not only helped me improving my vocabulary, listening and pronunciation, but also noticing the translation errors that sometimes occurred in subtitles.

Most of the learning strategies mentioned suit any academic subject. It is indeed a good idea to prepare yourself for the class, to sit near the teacher and to take notes, whether you are studying physics, cookery or French. Those who believe in the uniqueness of language, however, feel language learning is handled by the mind in ways that are different from other areas. Some consciously accessible learning strategies that treat language as a thing of its own may be highly useful for L2 learning, say the social strategies. But metacognitive or cognitive strategies treat language like any other part of the human mind. Hence they may benefit students with academic leanings who want to treat language as a subject but may not help those who want to use it for its normal functions in society, that is unless of course such knowledge translates into the practical ability to use the language, one of the controversies discussed in Chapter 11.

Box 6.9 Learning Strategies and Language Teaching

- Exploit the GLL strategies that are useful to the students.
- Develop the students' independence from the teacher with 'learner training' or directed learning.
- Make students aware of the range of strategies they can adopt.
- Provide specific training in particular strategies.
- Remember the similarities and differences between learning a second language and learning other school subjects.

A coursebook built on the SILL approach is *Tapestry 1 Listening and Speaking* (Benz and Dworak, 2000). Some are language learning strategies—'Practice speaking English with classmates as often as possible'. Some are called 'Academic power strategies'—'Learn how to address your teachers'. As the level of the course is claimed to be 'high beginning', there is a discrepancy between the level of the language the students are supposed to be learning, namely greetings and polite forms of address, and the level of language they are using for

discussing it. This is a problem with any teaching that involves explicit discussion of strategies, unless it can take place in the students' first language. The other problem is the extent to which the presentation of strategies in a class situation puts students in the position of practising strategies that are inappropriate for their particular learning style and which they would never choose voluntarily. Chapter 4 of *Tapestry* for example emphasises 'graphic organisers', that is to say associations of ideas in doodled networks, popular in the UK through the work of Tony Buzan books such as *The Mind Map Book* (2009). Useful as these may be for some students, those who do not think graphically and do not consciously store information through such mental networks are going to waste their time. Group teaching of strategies is inevitably in conflict with the individual's right to choose the best strategies for them.

Discussion Topics

- 1 Do you agree that communication strategies are only for when things go wrong?
- 2 To what extent do you think that communication strategies should be taught?
- 3 Choose a type of learning strategy and decide how you would teach it.
- 4 How important is the idea of strategies to language teaching?
- 5 How do you think it is possible to test whether students have learnt effective communication and learning strategies?
- 6 What differences are there between strategies used by beginners and advanced learners?
- 7 How might strategies teaching best be incorporated into textbooks?
- 8 Are compensatory strategies the same or different from learning strategies?
- 9 How can we combine the student's right to choose strategies with the teacher's duty to direct their learning?

Further Reading

One perspective on communication strategies can be found in Bialystok (1990), *Communication Strategies*. The Nijmegen communication strategies are best described in Poulisse (1990), *The Use of Compensatory Strategies by Dutch Learners of English*. The starting point for learning strategies is Oxford (1990), *Language Learning Strategies: What Every Teacher Should Know*; a more recent historically-organised survey is Oxford (2011) *Teaching and Researching Language Learning Strategies*. The leading current work is reflected in Macaro (2010).

Key Terms for Strategies

achievement strategies: a general approach in which you try to achieve your goal by finding ways of expressing what you want to say.

avoidance strategies: a general approach in which you shift or dodge your goal in speaking, say by changing topic.

cognitive strategies: specific, conscious ways of tackling learning.

communication strategies: are usually seen in SLA research as ways of solving a difficulty in communication, i.e. as fall-back strategies to be used when things go wrong rather than all the time.

compensatory strategies: are ways of getting round the fact you don't know an L2 word in one way or another.

conceptual archistrategy: means trying to convey the meaning of a word in another way rather than say its form.

cooperative strategies: involve interacting with someone else in various ways.

good language learner (GLL) strategies: are learning strategies employed by people known to be good at L2 learning.

learning strategy: 'a choice that the learner makes while learning or using the second language that affects learning: the learner's goal-directed actions for improving language proficiency or achievement, completing a task, or making learning more efficient, more effective, and easier' (Oxford, 2011).

linguistic archistrategy: falling back on existing linguistic knowledge, say the first language or other languages you know.

metacognitive strategies: involve planning your learning at a general level rather than specific techniques.

social strategies: involve interacting with other people in various ways.

7 Individual Differences in L2 Users and L2 Learners

Mostly this book concentrates on the factors that L2 learners have in common. Teachers usually have to deal with students in groups rather than as individuals; it is what all the class do that is important. However, at the end of the lesson, the group turns into 25 individuals who go off to use the second language for their own needs and in their own ways. Particular features of the learner's personality or mind encourage or inhibit L2 learning. The concern of the present chapter is then with how L2 learners vary as individuals, mostly dealing with language in a Lang₅ sense of knowledge in the mind. At the end of this chapter there is a list of the main individual factors that distinguish one second language learner from another.

This variation among individuals is one clear difference between first and second language learning; others are discussed in Chapter 10. Apart from a handful of children with Specific Language Impairment (SLI), everybody manages to learn to speak their first language, more or less by definition—human language is whatever human beings learn to speak. However we are all aware of vast differences in how well people can speak a second language. On the one hand you have the Czech-born financier Robert Maxwell able to pass for English, on the other you have Christine Lagarde, the head of the International Monetary Fund, forever sounding French. Every teacher knows that some students will learn a second language effortlessly, others will struggle forever. Some of the explanation for this lies undoubtedly in the different situations they encounter; children learn their L1 naturally in the intimate situations of the family; school learners learn an L2 formally in the public situation of the classroom.

However there still seems to be an element that can only be attributed to the individual: some people can learn another language, others can't. Whatever the teaching method used, some students will prosper, some won't, often despite their best intentions. This chapter looks at some of the differences between individuals that have been linked to how well they learn a second language in the classroom. Some have already been seen in the chapter on strategies: individuals choose for themselves how to process or learn language. Much of this research is applied psychology rather than applied linguistics, making use of concepts and measures from psychology rather than

from disciplines to do with language. This sometimes means it treats language teaching as if it were the teaching of any other subject on the curriculum rather than concentrating on its unique nature and carries over the psychologists' views of language rather than those of linguists.

7.1. Motivation for L2 Learning

Focusing Questions

- Why did you learn a second language? Do you think you have succeeded?
- Evaluate these statements:

Studying a foreign language is important to my students because they will be able to participate more freely in the activities of other cultural groups.

strongly agree	slightly agree	neither agree nor disagree	slightly disagree	strongly disagree
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Studying a foreign language can be important for my students because it will someday be useful in getting a good job.

strongly agree	slightly agree	neither agree nor disagree	slightly disagree	strongly disagree
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Keywords

- acculturation:** the ways in which L2 users adapt to life with two languages.
- additive bilingualism:** L2 learning that adds to the learner's capabilities in some way.
- subtractive bilingualism:** L2 learning that takes away from the learner's capabilities.

One reason for some students doing better than others is undoubtedly that they are better motivated. The child learning a first language does not have good or bad motivation in any meaningful sense. Language is one means through which all children fulfil their everyday needs, however diverse these may be.

One might as well ask what the motivation is for walking or for being a human being: speaking is as natural for children as breathing. In these terms the second language is superfluous for many classroom learners, who can already communicate with people and use language for thinking. Their mental and social life has been formed through their first language.

The usual meaning of motivation for the teacher is probably the interest that something generates in the students. A particular exercise, a particular topic, a particular song, may interest the students in the class, to the teacher's delight. Obvious enjoyment by the students is not necessarily a sign that learning is taking place—people probably enjoy eating ice-cream more than carrots but which has the better long-term effects? Or as Peters (1973) said, 'What interests the students is not necessarily in the students' interests.' Motivation in this sense is a short-term affair from moment to moment in the class.

So why do people learn languages? A survey of schools in six countries of the European Union (Bonnet, 2002) found that 94% of children thought that learning English was an advantage for 'communication abroad', 86% for 'facilitation of computer work' and 'comprehension of music texts', down to 64% 'sounds better in English' and 51% 'no expression in national language'. The inclusion of musical lyrics is interesting, showing the continuing influence of pop music sung in English. Indeed the Eurovision song contest in 2013 was won by Denmark with a song sung in English; 18 out of 26 songs were in English.

Another survey shows the ten most popular reasons across the EU for learning a new language (EuroBarometer, 2012), given in Box 7.1. A UK report came up with 700 (Gallagher-Brett, n.d.)—for further discussion see Chapter 9. Clearly the reasons why people learn new languages range far wider than their personal careers.

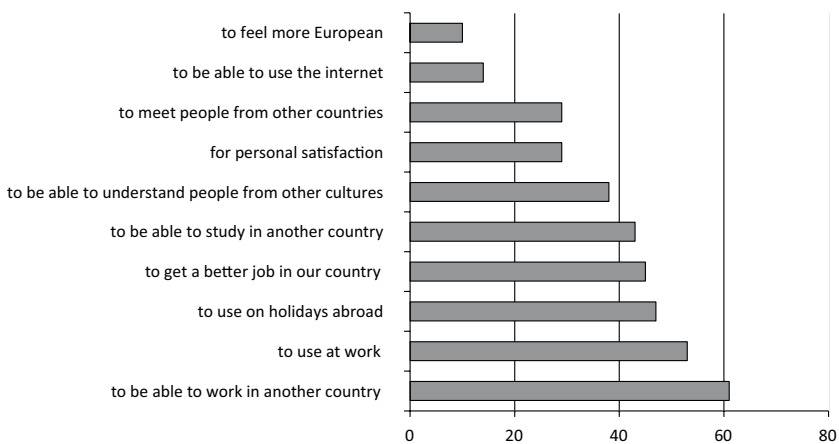


Figure 7.1 The advantages of learning a new language for Europeans (EuroBarometer, 2012).

Motivation in L2 learning has, however, mostly been used to refer to long-term stable attitudes in the students' minds, in particular integrative and instrumental reasons for studying modern languages (Gallagher-Brett, n.d.), ideas introduced by Robert Gardner and Wallace Lambert in a series of books and papers (Gardner and Lambert, 1972; Gardner, 1985; 2007). A discussion of the socio-educational model within which these two factors are crucial is provided in Chapter 10. The integrative motivation reflects whether the student identifies with the target culture and people in some sense, or rejects them. The Focusing Question 'Studying a foreign language is important to my students because they will be able to participate more freely in the activities of other cultural groups' was taken from one used by Gardner for testing integrativeness in the AMTB (Attitudes and Motivation Test Battery) which can be found in full online; an adapted extract is also on the website <http://www.viviancook.uk/SLLandLT/SLL<5thed.html>. The more that a student admires the target culture—reads its literature, visits the country on holiday, looks for opportunities to practise the language, and so on—the more successful they will be in the L2 classroom.

Instrumental motivation means learning the language for an ulterior motive unrelated to its use by native speakers—to pass an examination, to get a certain kind of job, and so on; the statement in the Focusing Questions section 'Studying a foreign language can be important for my students because it will someday be useful in getting a good job' also comes from Gardner's test battery. I learnt Latin at school because a classical language was at the time an entry requirement for university, and for no other reason.

Some people want to learn a second language with an integrative motivation such as 'I would like to live in the country where it is spoken' or with an instrumental one such as 'For my future career', or indeed with both, or indeed with other motivations. The relative importance of these varies from one part of the world to another. In Montreal, learners of French tend to be integratively motivated; in the Philippines learners of English tend to be instrumentally motivated (Gardner, 1985).

I have been using the Gardner questionnaire with L2 learners in different countries, as seen on the website. English school children learning French, for example score 77% for integrative motivation and 70% for instrumental; adult English students score 87% for integrative motivation and 66% for instrumental. Whether the country is Belgium, Poland, Singapore or Taiwan, the integrative motive comes out as more important than the instrumental. Surprisingly the highest scores for integrative motivation are Taiwan with 88%, the lowest Belgium with 74%. In other words people want to learn a language for getting on with people more than they do for job opportunities, confirmed by Coleman (1996) for the UK.

The distinction between integrative and instrumental motivation has been used as a point of reference by many researchers. Zoltan Dornyei (1990) argues that it is biased towards the Canadian situation where there is a particular balance between the two official languages, English and French. He therefore

tested the motivation of learners of English in the European situation of Hungary. He found that an instrumental motivation concerned with future careers was indeed very powerful. Though an integrative motivation was also relevant, it was not, as in Canada, related to actual contact with native groups but to general attitudes and stereotypes; it became more important as the learners advanced in the language, as was the case in England. In addition he identified two factors relating to classroom learning. One was the need for achievement—trying to improve yourself in general, more specifically to pass an examination; the other attributions about past failures—whatever else the learners blame their failures on.

Going beyond the Gardner model, Zoltan Dornyei has been developing a strand of thinking about motivation. His 'L2 Motivational Self System' suggests that our success in learning depends on how we want to achieve our Ideal L2 Self (Dornyei, 2005). To do this we must have a 'vision' of how we want to be in the future (Muir and Dornyei, 2013). He distinguishes between what can be called 'ordinary' motivation and a heightened state called 'Directed Motivational Current', in which all our efforts are concentrated on a particular goal, like winning an athletics race or passing an examination (Muir and Dornyei, 2013).

Motivation and Teaching

Students will find it difficult to learn a second language in the classroom if they have neither instrumental nor integrative motivation, as is probably often the case in school language teaching, and if they feel negatively about bilingualism or are too attached to monolingualism. School children have no particular contact with the foreign culture and no particular interest in it, nor do their job prospects depend on it; their attitudes to L2 users may depend more on the stereotypes from their cultural situations than on any real contact. Teachers of French in England try to compensate for this lack of interest by stressing the career benefits that knowledge of a second language may bring, or by building up interest in the foreign culture through exchanges with French schools or bringing croissants to class, i.e. by cultivating both types of motivation in their students. Teachers of Irish Gaelic have been among the most dispirited people I have met, as it is difficult to sell a language to students that is spoken by remote communities of fishermen and farmers on the west coast.

Interesting as Dornyei's concepts of the Ideal Self and Directed Motivational Current may be, they seem to apply to all education, or indeed all human life, not just language teaching. Applied to the classroom, Muir and Dornyei (2013) suggest creating vivid goals, tasks with definite outcomes, project-based work and Study Abroad, already used by most teachers, rather than any new practice. These ideas seem general educational concepts to be covered in any teacher teaching not just as the remit of language teachers.

Otherwise teachers may have to go along with the students' motivation, or at least be sufficiently aware of the students' motivation so that any problems

can be smoothed over. Coursebooks reflect the writer's assessment of the students' motivation. The coursebook *Touchstone* (McCarthy, McCarten and Sandiford, 2005) reflects a world of young people, some overseas students, meeting in the park or living with their parents, baby-sitting for their friends, interested in TV and films, celebrities and the internet. This will be valuable to students interested in this lifestyle and an alienating experience for those who prefer something else. *Outcomes* (Dellar and Walkley, 2011) features the lives of young multi-ethnic students with cosmopolitan interests, interested in travelling and the internet and having few responsibilities. While this may be motivating for multilingual adult classes in the UK, it is less relevant for single language groups of children in other countries.

In my own coursebook series, *English For Life*, the location of the first book, *People and Places* (Cook, 1980), is an imaginary English-speaking town called Banford, inhabited by a range of old age pensioners, children, teachers and businessmen; the students gradually built up personal profiles of themselves in a section at the back of the book. The second book, *Meeting People*, used English in particular cities in different parts of the world, namely Hong Kong, London and New York. The third book, *Living with People*, took the specific location of Oxford in England and used its actual supermarkets, hospitals, radio stations, and so on as background, including interviews with people who worked in them. The aim was that students at the beginner level would be motivated by a non-specific English for use anywhere; at the next stage they wanted to use English in different countries of the world; at the advanced stage they might envisage living in an English-speaking country. Coursebooks differ according to whether they prefer integrative or instrumental motivation from the outset, reflecting educational priorities in particular countries. An integrative motivation for English may not be admissible in Israel or mainland China for example.

In an ideal teacher's world, students would enter the classrooms admiring the target culture and language, wanting to get something out of the L2 learning for themselves, eager to experience the benefits of bilingualism and thirsting for knowledge. In practice teachers have to be aware of the reservations and preconceptions of their students. What they think of the teacher, the course and L2 users in general heavily affects their success. These are the factors that teachers can influence rather than the learners' more deep-seated motivations.

Motivation also goes in both directions. High motivation is one factor that causes successful learning; in reverse, successful learning causes high motivation. The process of creating successful learning, which can spur high motivation, may be under the teacher's control, if not the original motivation. The choice of teaching materials and the information content of the lesson, for example, should correspond to the motivations of the students. As Lambert (1990) puts it while talking about minority group children, 'The best way I can see to release the potential [of bilingualism] is to transform their subtractive experiences with bilingualism and biculturalism into additive ones.'

In my writings on the multi-competence perspective I have persistently tried to stress the positive aspects of second language learning: students get demotivated by their constant failure to be native speakers, not motivated by their success as L2 learners. I learnt French in classroom for about eight years yet my productive skills are now effectively zero (though receptive skills have largely survived): as an imitation French native speaker, I am a dismal failure having say 10% command of the language. As an L2 user of French, however, even with this minimal level, I can do things no monolingual can do: my 100% English adds on to my 10% French to get 110%. Students should be motivated by being told they are doing things no monolingual can do, not failing at the things monolinguals do.

Box 7.1 Motivation and L2 Learning

- Both integrative and instrumental motivations may lead to success, but lack of either causes problems.
- Motivation in this sense has great inertia.
- Short-term motivation towards the day-to-day activities in the classroom and general motivations for classroom learning are also important.

7.2. Attitudes

Focusing Questions

- What do you think are people's typical reactions to foreigners? To bilinguals? To monolinguals?
- Mark how much you agree with these statements:

It is important to be able to speak two languages.

strongly agree	slightly agree	neither agree nor disagree	slightly disagree	strongly disagree
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

I will always feel more myself in my first language than in my second.

strongly agree	slightly agree	neither agree nor disagree	slightly disagree	strongly disagree
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

More detailed tests are on the website (available at <http://www.viviancook.uk/SLLandLT/SLL<5thed.html>).

The roots of the motivations discussed in the last section are deep within the students' minds and their cultural backgrounds. One issue is how the student's own cultural background relates to the background projected by the L2 culture. Lambert (1981; 1990) makes an important distinction between 'additive' and 'subtractive' bilingualism. In additive bilingualism, the learners feel they are adding something new to their skills and experience by learning a new language, without taking anything away from what they already know. In subtractive bilingualism on the other hand, they feel that the learning of a new language threatens what they have already gained for themselves. Successful L2 learning takes place in additive situations; learners who see the second language as diminishing themselves will not succeed. This relates directly to many immigrant or multi-ethnic situations; a group that feels in danger of losing its identity by learning a second language does not learn the second language well. Chilean refugees I taught in London in the 1970s often lamented their lack of progress in English. However much they consciously wanted to learn English, I felt that they saw it subconsciously as committing themselves to permanent exile and thus to subtracting from their identity as Chileans. It is not motivation for learning as such which is important to teaching but motivation for learning a particular second language. In a survey conducted by the Linguistic Minorities Project (1983) monolingual UK children showed a preference in order of popularity for learning German, Italian, Spanish and French. Young people in the European Community as a whole, however, had the order of preference English, Spanish, German, French and Italian (Commission of the European Communities, 1987).

A useful model of attitudes that has been developed over many years is acculturation theory (Berry, 1998). This sees the overall attitudes towards a second culture as coming from the interaction between two distinct questions:

1 Is it considered to be of value to maintain cultural identity and characteristics?

In my experience as a teacher in London, Hungarian students of English tended to merge with the rest of the population; they did not maintain their separate cultural identities. Polish students on the other hand stayed within their local community, which had Polish newspapers, theatres, churches and a Saturday school; they were clearly maintaining their cultural differences. What the Poles valued, the Hungarians did not.

2 Is it considered to be of value to maintain relationships with other groups?

Again from my own experience, some students keep to themselves, others mix freely. Greek students in England for example usually seem to mix with other Greeks. Japanese students in England on the other hand seem to mix much more with other people and I am often surprised that two Japanese students in the same university class do not know each other.

According to the acculturation model (Figure 7.2), both questions could be answered ‘yes’ or ‘no’, though of course these would be questions of degree rather than absolute differences. The different combinations of ‘yes’ and ‘no’ yield four main patterns of acculturation, as shown below: integration (Q1 ‘yes’, Q2 ‘no’), assimilation (Q1 ‘no’, Q2 ‘yes’), separation (Q1 ‘yes’, Q2 ‘yes’) and marginalisation (Q1 ‘no’, Q2 ‘no’).

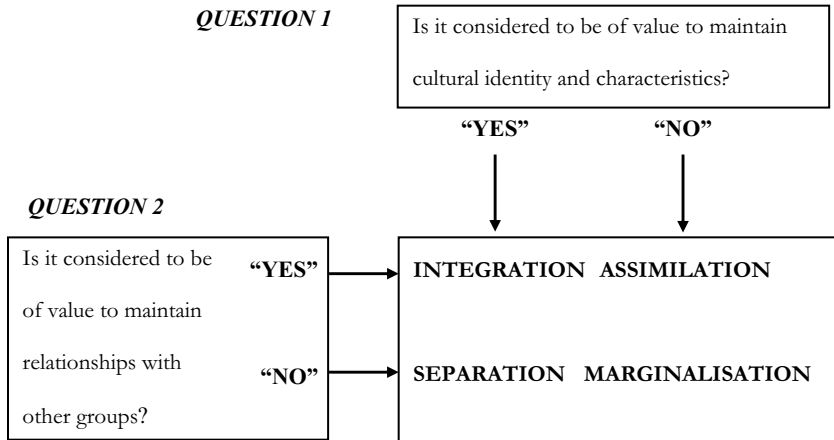


Figure 7.2 The Acculturation Model.

There are then four possible patterns of acculturation. Marginalisation is the least rewarding version, corresponding loosely to Lambert’s subtractive bilingualism. Assimilation results in the eventual dying out of the first language—the so-called ‘melting-pot’ model once used in the United States. Separation results in friction-prone situations like Canada or Belgium where the languages are spoken in physically separate regions. Integration is a multi-lingual state where the languages exist alongside each other in harmony.

This model is mainly used for groups that have active contact within the same country. My examples come from the use of English in England, not of English in Japan. When there are no actual contacts between the two groups, the model is less relevant, particularly for classroom learners who have no contact with the L2 culture except through their teacher and whose experience of the L2 culture is through the media or through the stereotypes in their own culture.

A crucial aspect of attitudes is what the students think about people who are L2 users or monolinguals. I asked adults and children in different countries to rate how much they agreed with statements such as ‘It is important to be able to speak two languages’. As we see in Box 7.3, most groups have fairly positive attitudes towards speaking two languages, but the British adults, who were university students, are clearly more positive.

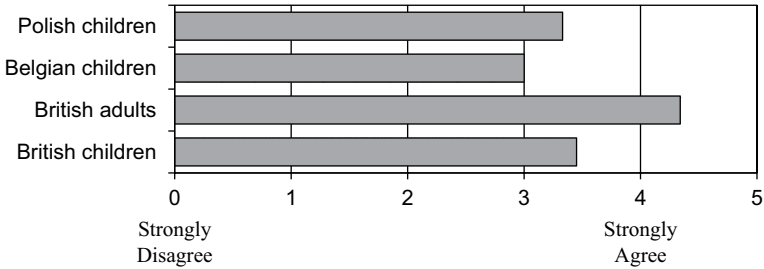


Figure 7.3 Responses to ‘It is important to be able to speak two languages’.

The same groups were asked about monolingualism. Their answers to the question ‘I will always feel more myself in my first language than in my second’ were as follows:

The British children feel less comfortable in the second language than the others; they feel more threatened by the new language.

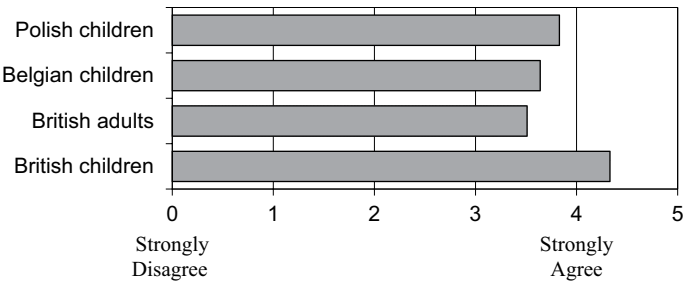


Figure 7.4 Responses to ‘I will always feel more myself in my first language than in another language’.

In this case rather few of the people feel that learning a second language means forfeiting the first language, a topic developed in the context of language teaching goals in Chapter 9.

Attitudes and Language Teaching

One crucial point coming out of this is how teaching reinforces unfavourable images of L2 users. Virtually all the L2 users represented in coursebooks for example are either students who are in the process of learning the second language or ignorant foreigners using tourist services. Students never see successful L2 users in action and so have no role model to emulate other than the native speaker, which they will very rarely match. The famous people whose photos proliferate in coursebooks tend to be people who are not known as anything other than monolinguals; *English Unlimited* (Doff, 2010, pp. 78–79) presents photos of Mahatma Gandhi, Umm Kulthum, Leo Tolstoy, Mao Zedong and Pablo

Picasso among others, some of whom were undoubtedly L2 users but no mention is made of this: Gandhi for instance spoke at least three languages; Tolstoy, according to his grandson, thirteen. François Grosjean (1982, p. 285) indeed provides a list of celebrated bilinguals, unlike any of the coursebooks. It cannot do the students any harm to show them that the world is full of successful L2 users; indeed, as De Swaan (2001) argues, they are necessary for its functioning. Box 7.2 demonstrates this through a list of Nobel Prize Winners who speak more than one language—perhaps another sign of the advantages of knowing other languages. We see later that the goals of language teaching include changing people's attitudes towards other cultures and using second languages effectively. These are hardly advanced by showing students either students like themselves or people who are unable to use more than one language.

Box 7.2 Nobel Prize Winners Who Speak More Than One Language

Kofi Annan: politician: Akan/ English
Samuel Beckett: writer: English/ French
J.M. Coetzee: writer: Afrikaans/ English
Marie Curie: physicist/chemist: Polish/ French
Albert Einstein: physicist: German/ English
Aung San Suu Kyi: politician: Burmese/ English
Erwin Schrödinger: physicist: German/ English
Wole Soyinka: writer: Yoruba/ English
Malala Yousafzai: activist: Pashto /Urdu/ English
Chien-Shiung Wu: physicist: Chinese/ English
Charles K. Kao: physicist: Chinese/ English/ French
Venkatraman Ramakrishnan: biologist: Tamil/ Hindi/ English

7.3. Aptitude: Are Some People Better at Learning a Second Language Than Others?

Focusing Questions

- Why do you think some people are good at learning other languages?
- Do you think the same people learn a language well in the classroom as learn it well in a natural setting, or do these demand different qualities?

Keyword

Modern Language Aptitude Test (MLAT): the standard test of language learning aptitude, using phonemic coding, grammatical sensitivity, inductive language learning ability, rote learning.

Everybody knows people who have a knack for learning second languages and others who are rather poor at it. Some immigrants who have been in a country for twenty years are very fluent. Others from the same background and living in the same circumstances for the same amount of time speak the language rather poorly. Given that their ages, motivations, and so on are the same, why are there such differences? As always the popular view has to be qualified to some extent. Descriptions of societies where each individual uses several languages daily, such as Central Africa or Pakistan, seldom mention people who cannot cope with the demands of a multilingual existence, other than those with academic study problems. Differences in L2 learning ability are apparently only felt in societies where multilingualism is treated as a problem rather than accepted as an everyday fact of life.

So far the broad term 'knack' for learning languages has been used. The more usual term, however, is 'aptitude'; some people have more aptitude for learning second languages than others. Aptitude has almost invariably been applied to students in classrooms. It does not refer to the knack that some people have for learning in real-life situations but to the ability to learn from teaching. In the 1950s and 1960s considerable effort went into establishing what successful students had in common. The *Modern Languages Aptitude Test* (MLAT) requires the student to carry out L2 learning on a small scale. It incorporates four main factors that predict a student's success in the classroom (Carroll, 1981). These are:

- *Phonemic coding ability*: how well the student can use phonetic script to distinguish phonemes, the distinctive sounds of a language.
- *Grammatical sensitivity*: whether the student can pick out grammatical functions in the sentence.
- *Inductive language learning ability*: whether the student can generalise patterns from one sentence to another.
- *Rote learning*: whether the student can remember vocabulary lists of foreign words paired with translations.

Such tests are not neutral about what happens in a classroom nor about the goals of language teaching. They assume that learning words by heart is an important part of L2 learning ability, that the spoken language is crucial, and that grammar consists of structural patterns. In short, MLAT predicts how well a student will do in a course that is predominantly audiolingual in methodology rather than in a course taught by other methods. Wesche (1981) divided Canadian students according to MLAT and other tests into those who were best suited to an 'analytical' approach and those who were best suited to an 'audiovisual' approach. Half she put in the right type of class, half in the wrong (whether this is acceptable behaviour by a teacher is another question). The students in the right class 'achieved superior scores'. It is not just aptitude in general that counts but the right kind of aptitude for the particular learning situation. Predictions about success need to take into account the kind of classroom that is involved rather than being biased towards one kind or assuming there is a single factor of aptitude which applies regardless of situation.

Krashen (1981a) suggests aptitude is important for 'formal' situations such as classrooms, and attitude is important for 'informal' real-world situations. While aptitude tests are indeed more or less purpose-designed for classroom learners, this still leaves open the existence of a general knack for learning languages in street settings. Horwitz (1987) anticipated that a test of cognitive level would go with communicative competence and a test of aptitude with linguistic competence. She found, however, a strong link between the two tests.

Peter Skehan (1986; 1998) developed a slightly different set of factors out of MLAT, namely:

- 1 *phonemic coding ability*. This allows the learner to process input more readily and thus to get to more complex areas of processing more easily—supposing that phonemes are in fact relevant to processing.
- 2 *language analytic ability*. This allows the learner to work out the 'rules' of the language and build up the core processes for handling language.
- 3 *memory*. This permits the learner to store and retrieve aspects of language rapidly.

These three factors reflect progressively deeper processing of language and hence may change according to the learner's stage.

The lack of this 'knack' is sometimes related to other problems that L2 learners have. Richard Sparks and his colleagues (1989) have observed students whose general problems with language have gone unnoticed until they did badly on a foreign language course. They lacked a linguistic coding ability in their first language as well as their second, particularly phonological, like dyslexia apparently unrelated to their intelligence.

Later work reviewed by Peter Robinson (2005) has tended to split aptitude up into separate components, i.e. whether people are better at specific aspects of learning rather than overall learning. A particular sensitivity to language may help with FonF (Focus on Form) activities for instance. Second language learning in formal conditions may in particular depend upon superior cognitive processing ability. Indeed the best predictor of doing well in a second language at school is overall grade average. Obviously this implies there is no relationship between second language acquisition in a classroom and first language acquisition since none of these attributes matter to the native child.

Aptitude and Teaching

The problem for language teachers is what to do once the students have been tested for academic language learning aptitude. There are at least three possibilities:

- 1 *Select students who are likely to succeed in the classroom* and bar those who are likely to fail. This would, however, be unthinkable in most settings with open access to education.

- 2 *Stream students into different classes for levels of aptitude*, say high-flyers, average, and below average. The Graded Objectives Movement in England, for instance, set the same overall goals for all students at each stage but allowed them different periods of time for getting there (Harding, Page and Rowell, 1981).
- 3 *Provide different teaching for different types of aptitude* with different teaching methods and final examinations. This might lead to varied exercises within the class, say for those with and without phonemic coding ability, to parallel classes, or to self-directed learning. In most educational establishments this would be a luxury in terms of staffing and accommodation, however desirable.
- 4 *Excuse students with low aptitude from compulsory foreign language requirements*. In some educational systems the students may be required to pass a foreign language which is unrelated to the rest of their course, as I had to take French and Latin to order to read English at university. An extremely low aptitude for L2 learning may be grounds for exemption from this requirement if their other work passes.

The overall lesson is to see students in particular contexts. The student whose performance is dismal in one class may be gifted in another. Any class teaching is a compromise to suit the greatest number of students. Only in individualised or self-directed learning perhaps can this be overcome.

Box 7.3 Aptitude for L2 learning

- Most aptitude tests predict success in L2 academic classrooms.
- Aptitude breaks down into different factors such as phonemic coding ability and memory.

7.4. Age: Are Young L2 Learners Better Than Old Learners?

Focusing Questions

- What do you think is the best age for learning a new language? Why?
- How would your teaching of, say, the present tense, differ according to whether you were teaching children or adults?

Keywords

critical period hypothesis (CPH): the claim that human beings are only capable of learning language between the age of 2 years and the early teens.

immersion teaching: teaching the whole curriculum through the second language, best known from Canada.

Undoubtedly children are popularly believed to be better at learning second languages than adults. People always know one friend or acquaintance who started learning English as an adult and never managed to learn it properly and another who learnt it as a child and is indistinguishable from a native. Linguists as well as the general public often share this point of view. Chomsky (1959) has talked of the immigrant child learning a language quickly while 'the subtleties that become second nature to the child may elude his parents despite high motivation and continued practice'. My new postgraduate overseas students prove this annually. They start the year by worrying whether their children will ever cope with English and they end it by complaining how much better their children speak it than they do.

This belief in the superiority of young learners was enshrined in the critical period hypothesis (CPH): the claim that human beings are only capable of learning their first language between the age of two years and the early teens (Lenneberg, 1967). A variety of explanations have been put forward for the apparent decline in adults: physical factors such as the loss of 'plasticity' in the brain and 'lateralisation' of the brain; social factors such as the different situations and relationships that children encounter compared to adults; and cognitive explanations such as the interference with natural language learning by the adult's more abstract mode of thinking (Cook, 1986). The obvious conclusion is that teachers should take advantage of this ease of learning by teaching a second language as early as possible, hence such attempts to teach a foreign language in the primary school as the brief-lived primary-school French programme in England. Indeed there has been a growth in the UK of 'bilingual' playgroups teaching French to English-speaking under-fives. Governments world-wide have introduced second language teaching at earlier ages in the hopes that this will improve the students' prospects.

Evidence for the Effects of Age on L2 Learning

But evidence in favour of the superiority of young children has proved surprisingly hard to find. Much research, on the contrary, shows that age is a positive advantage. English-speaking adults and children who had gone to live in Holland were compared using a variety of tests (Snow and Hoefnagel-Höhle, 1978). At the end of three months, the older learners were better at all aspects of Dutch except pronunciation. After a year this advantage had faded and the older learners were better only at vocabulary. Studies in Scandinavia showed that Swedish children improved at learning English throughout the school years, and that Finnish-speaking children under eleven learning Swedish in Sweden were worse than those over eleven (Eckstrand, 1978). Although the Total Physical Response method of teaching with its emphasis on physical action appears more suitable to children, when it was used for teaching Russian to adults and children the older students were consistently better (Asher and Price, 1967).

Even with the immersion techniques used in Canada in which English-speaking children are taught the curriculum substantially through French, late

immersion pupils were better than early immersion students at marking number agreement on verbs, and at using 'clitic' pronouns ('le', 'me', etc.) in object verb constructions (Harley, 1986). To sum up, if children and adults are compared who are learning a second language in exactly the same way, whether as immigrants to Holland, or by the same method in the classroom, adults are better. The apparent superiority of adults in such controlled research may mean that the typical situations in which children find themselves are better suited to L2 learning than those adults encounter. Age itself is not so important as the different interactions that learners of different ages have with the situation and with other people.

However, there are many who would disagree and find age a burden for L2 learning. These chiefly base themselves on work by Johnson and Newport (1989), who tested Chinese and Korean learners living in the United States and found that the earlier they had arrived there the better they were at detecting ungrammatical use of grammatical morphemes such as 'the' and plural '-s' and other properties of English such as wh-questions and word order; indeed those who arrived under the age of seven were no different from natives. DeKeyser and Larson-Hall (2005) found a negative correlation with age in ten research studies into age of acquisition and grammaticality judgments, i.e. older learners tend to do worse.

Usually children are thought to be better at pronunciation in particular. The claim is that an authentic accent cannot be acquired if the second language is learnt after a particular age, say the early teens. For instance, the best age for Cuban immigrants to come to the United States so far as pronunciation is concerned is under six, the worst over thirteen (Asher and Garcia, 1969). Ramsey and Wright (1974) found younger immigrants to Canada had less foreign accent than older ones. But the evidence mostly is not clear-cut. Indeed Ramsey and Wright's evidence has been challenged by Cummins (1981). Other research shows that, when the teaching situation is the same, older children are better than younger children even at pronunciation. An experiment with the learning of Dutch by English children and adults found imitation was more successful with older learners (Snow and Hoefnagel-Höhle, 1977). Neufeld (1978) trained adults with a pronunciation technique that moved them gradually from listening to speaking. After eighteen hours of teaching, nine out of twenty students convinced listeners they were native speakers of Japanese, eight out of twenty that they were native Chinese speakers.

It has become common to distinguish short-term benefits of youth from long-term disadvantages of age. David Singleton (1989) sums up his authoritative review of age with the statement:

The one interpretation of the evidence which does not appear to run into contradictory data is that in naturalistic situations those whose exposure to a second language begins in childhood in general eventually surpass those whose exposure begins in adulthood, even though the latter usually show some initial advantage over the former.

Adults start more quickly and then slow down. Though children start more slowly, they finish up at a higher level. A current view on classroom acquisition (Munoz, 2008) supports the claim that older learners learn faster than younger ones; younger learners have an advantage only when they have more language exposure.

My own view is that much of the research is still open to other interpretations. The studies that show long-term disadvantages mostly use different methodologies and different types of learners from those conducted into short-term learning. In particular the long-term research has by coincidence mostly used immigrants, particularly to the United States, but the short-term research has used learners in educational systems elsewhere. Hence factors such as immigration cannot at present be disentangled from age. Any comparison of younger and older learners would also involve them having the same amounts of L2 exposure (Munoz, 2008), almost impossible to achieve. Nor is age an adequate explanation in itself if we cannot explain which aspect of maturation causes the difference, whether physical, social, cognitive, or linguistic; age is a multitude of factors, not a single dimension.

For me, however, the big problem is that the age research still bases itself squarely on the native speaker model. An important study by Abrahamsson and Hytenstam (2009) is entitled 'Age of onset and nativelikeness in a second language'. The title already gives away that the height of success for acquisition is seen as becoming like a native speaker. The methodology indeed measures success as 'perceived nativelikeness' of L2 Swedish speakers' accents in terms of Stockholm speech. This is then the usual monolingual perspective denial that there is a specific L2 target or indeed a unique L2 user. As Mauranen (2012, p. 4) points out, 'monolingualism is neither the typical condition nor the gold standard'. Yet virtually all research into effects of age still assumes likeness to native speaker means success. I will only be convinced of the effects of age when I see research that compares successful and unsuccessful L2 users according to age in terms of how well they can use another language, not how near they are to native speakers.

Age and Language Teaching

How should a language teacher take the student's age into account? One question is when L2 teaching should start. This also involves how long the learners are going to be studying. If they are intending to spend many years learning the second language, they might as well start as children rather than as adults since they will probably end up better speakers. If they are going to learn the second language for a few years and then drop it, like the majority of learners perhaps, there is an advantage for adults, who would reach a higher standard during the same period. But, as Bernard Spolsky (1989a) points out, 'Educational systems usually arrive first at a decision of optimal learning age on political or economic grounds and then seek justification for their decision.' When to teach children a second language is seldom decided by language teachers or L2 learning experts. Box 7.6 shows the ages at which children start learning

another language in different countries ranging from 3 in parts of Belgium to 14 in the United States.

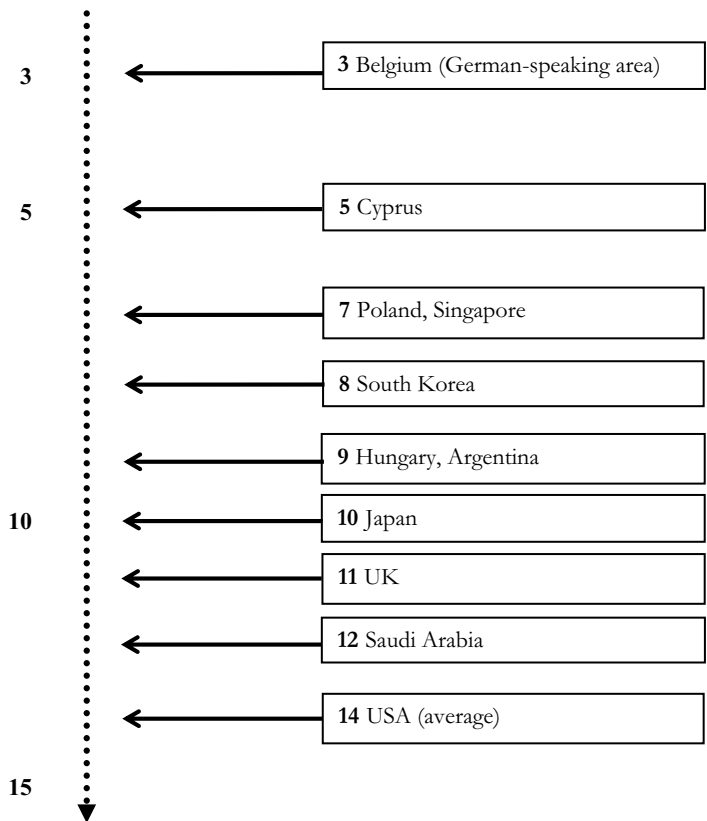


Figure 7.5 Ages at which children start learning second languages in different countries in 2013.

A related question is whether the use of teaching methods should vary according to the age of the students. At particular ages students prefer particular methods. Teenagers may dislike any technique that exposes them in public; role-play and simulation are in conflict with their adolescent anxieties. Adults can feel they are not learning properly in play-like situations and prefer a conventional formal style of teaching. Adults learn better than children from the ‘childish’ activities of Total Physical Response (Asher and Garcia, 1969)—if you can get them to join in! Age is by no means crucial to L2 learning itself. Spolsky (1989a) describes three conditions for L2 learning related to age:

- 1 ‘Formal’ classroom learning requires ‘skills of abstraction and analysis’. That is to say, if the teaching method entails sophisticated understanding and

reasoning by the student, as for instance a traditional grammar-translation method, then it is better for the student to be older.

- 2 *The child is more open to L2 learning in informal situations.* Hence children are easier to teach through an informal approach.
- 3 *The natural L2 situation may favour children.* The teaching of adults requires the creation of language situations in the classroom that in some ways compensate for this lack. An important characteristic of language spoken to small children is that it is concerned with the 'here and now' rather than with the absent objects or the abstract topics that are talked about in adult conversation—adults do not talk about the weather much to a two-year-old! That is to say, ordinary speech spoken by adults to adults is too sophisticated for L2 learning. Restricting the language spoken to the beginning L2 learner to make it reflect the here-and-now could be of benefit. This is reminiscent of the audiovisual and situational teaching methods, which stress the provision of concrete visual information through physical objects or pictures in the early stages of L2 learning. But it may go against the idea that the content of teaching should be relevant and should not be trivial.

Most adaptation to the age of the learner in textbooks concerns the presentation of material and topics. Take starter *speakout* (2012), the first lesson starts with photographs of opposite sex pairs of smiling people aged between about eighteen and twenty-five, dressed in shirts, and looking lively, travelling by air and checking in at hotels—all in colourfully glossy photographs; the unit titles in the book include holidays and shopping—what age would you say this was aimed at? The opening lesson of *Hotline* (Hutchinson, 1992) has a photo-strip story of two young men going along a street, one in a suit, the other with trainers and a purple backpack; topics include soap operas such as *Neighbours* and demos against roadworks—what age is this for? The answers from the blurb are 'adult' and 'teenagers' respectively. But, as always with published materials, they have to aim at an 'average' student; many teenagers may scorn soap operas, many adults have no interest in discussing holidays.

Box 7.4 Age in L2 Learning

- To be older leads to better learning in the short term, other things being equal.
- Some research still favours child superiority at pronunciation, but not reliably.
- Children get to a higher level of proficiency in the long term than those who start L2 learning while older, perhaps because adults slow down.

7.5. Are Other Personality Traits Important to L2 Learning?

Focusing Questions

- Do you tend to straighten pictures if they are crooked?
- What type of personality do you think is the mark of a successful student?

Though there has been research into how other variations between L2 learners contribute to their final success, it has produced a mass of conflicting answers. Mostly, isolated areas have been looked at rather than the learner as a whole. Much of the research is based on the non-uniqueness view of language and so assumes that L2 learning varies in the same way as other types of learning, say learning to drive or to type. One piece of research shows that something is beneficial; a second piece of research following up the same issue shows it is harmful. Presumably this conflict demonstrates the complexity of the learning process and the varieties of situation in which L2 learning occurs. But this is slender consolation to teachers, who want a straight answer.

Cognitive Style

The term ‘cognitive style’ refers to a technical psychological distinction between typical ways of thinking. Imagine standing in a room that is slowly leaning to one side without the people inside it knowing. Some people attempt to stand upright, others lean so that they are parallel to the walls. Those who lean have a field-dependent (FD) cognitive style; that is to say, their thinking relates to their surroundings. Those who stand upright have a field-independent (FI) style; they think independently of their surroundings. The usual test for cognitive style is less dramatic, relying on distinguishing shapes in pictures and is thus called the Embedded Figures Test. Those who can pick out shapes despite confusing backgrounds are field-independent; those who cannot are field-dependent. My own informal check is whether a person adjusts pictures that are hanging crookedly or does not. These are tendencies rather than absolutes; any individual is somewhere on the continuum between the poles of FI and FD.

A difference in cognitive style might well make a difference to success in L2 learning—another aspect of aptitude. Most researchers have found that a tendency towards FI (field independence) helps the student with conventional classroom learning (Alptekin and Atakan, 1990). This seems in a sense obvious in that formal education in the West successively pushes students up the rungs of a ladder of abstraction away from the concrete (Donaldson, 1978). Hansen and Stansfield (1981) used three tests with L2 learners: those that measured the ability to communicate, those that measured linguistic knowledge, and those that measured both together. FI learners had slight advantages for communicative tasks, greater advantages for academic tasks, and greatest for the combined tasks. However, Bacon (1987) later found no differences

between FD and FI students in terms of how much they spoke and how well they spoke. This illustrates again the interaction between student and teaching method; not all methods suit all students.

Cognitive style varies to some extent from one culture to another. There are variations between learners on different islands in the Pacific and between different sexes, though field independence tends to go with good scores on a cloze test (Hansen, 1984). Indeed there are massive cross-cultural differences in these measures. To take Chinese as an example, first of all there is a general cultural difference between East and West as to the importance of foreground versus background, which affects the issue; secondly the Embedded Figures test does not work since people who are users of character-based scripts find it much easier to see embedded figures and other tests have to be used (Nisbett, 2003). Recent research also shows that it can vary within the same culture: Catholics for example are more inclined to think 'globally', non-religious people 'locally' (Colzato et al., 2010).

There is no general reason why FI people in general should be better or worse at cognitive functioning than those who are FD. FI and FD are simply two styles of thinking. A challenge has been posed to the use of FI/FD in second language acquisition by Roger Griffiths and Ronald Sheen (1992), who argue that the concept has not been sufficiently well defined in the research and is no longer of much interest within the discipline of psychology, from which it came.

Personality Differences

Perhaps an outgoing, sociable person learns a second language better than a reserved, shy, person. Again, the connection is not usually so straightforward. Some researchers have investigated the familiar division between extrovert and introvert personalities. In Jungian psychology the distinction applies to two tendencies in the way that people interact with the world. Some people relate to objects outside them, some to the interior world. Rossier (1975) found a link between extroversion and oral fluency. Dewaele and Furnham (1999) found that more complex tasks were easier for extrovert learners. There would seem a fairly obvious connection to language teaching methods. The introverts might be expected to prefer academic teaching that emphasises individual learning and language knowledge; the extroverts audiolingual or communicative teaching that emphasises group participation and social know-how.

Other Individual Variation

What else? Many other variations in the individual's mental make-up have been checked against L2 success.

Intelligence, for example, has some connection with school performance. There are links between intelligence and aptitude in classrooms, as might be expected (Genesee, 1976).

Sex differences have also been investigated. In my experience of talking with teachers it is true in every country that second languages are more popular school subjects among girls. About 70% of undergraduates studying modern languages in the UK are women (Coleman, 1996). Greek women students were better than men at syntax and semantics (Andreou, Vlachos and Andreou, 2005). Using the SILL, Green and Oxford (1995) found that women overall used more learning strategies than men, particularly social strategies such as 'Ask other person to slow down or repeat' and meaning strategies such as 'Review English lessons often'. Women students were more embarrassed by their mistakes according to Coleman (1996).

Level of first language is also relevant. Some studies support the common teacher's view that children who are more advanced in their first language are better at their second language (Skehan, 1989).

Social class. Upper-middle-class students have more favourable motivational characteristics particularly students' belief that they are going to be successful (Kormos and Kiddle, 2013).

Empathy. Those students who are able to empathise with the feelings of others are better at learning L2 pronunciation, though this depends to some extent on the language the students are acquiring (Guiora et al., 1972).

Of course all teachers have their own pet beliefs about factors that are crucial to L2 learning. One of my own suspicions is that the time of year when the student was born makes a difference, due in England, not to astrological sign, but to the extra schooling children get if they are born at certain times. But my own checks with the university computer cannot seem to prove a link between choosing a language degree and being born in a particular month.

Many of the factors in this chapter cannot be affected by the teacher. Age cannot be changed, nor can gender, intelligence and most areas of personality. As teachers cannot change them, they have to live with them. In other words, teaching has to recognise the differences between students. At a gross level this means catering for the factors that a class have in common, say age and type of motivation. At a finer level the teacher has to cater for the differences between individuals in the class by providing opportunities for each of them to benefit in their own way: the same teaching can be taken in different ways by different students. To some teachers this is not sufficient; nothing will do but complete individualization so that each student has his or her own unique course. For class teaching, the aspects in which students are different have to be balanced against those that they share. Much L2 learning is common ground whatever the individual differences between learners may be.

Box 7.5 Individual Differences and Language Teaching

- The variety and nature of motivations need to be recognised.
- Teachers should work with, not against, student motivation in materials and content.
- Important attitudes in L2 learners include maintaining cultural identity, maintaining relationships with other groups, beliefs about bilingualism, and beliefs about monolingualism.
- Students without aptitude can be excluded (if allowable on other grounds).
- Different teaching can be provided for learners with different types of aptitude, even streaming into fast and slow streams.
- Age issues affect when and how to teach the second language.

Discussion Topics

- 1 Suggest some ways in which you would increase (a) positive short-term motivation and (b) integrative motivation in your students.
- 2 Is it really possible to *change* the students' underlying motivation, as opposed to increasing it?
- 3 What should be done with students who have a low aptitude for L2 learning?
- 4 What do you think is the best age to learn a foreign language?
- 5 Name two teaching techniques that would work best with adults and two with children.
- 6 How can one cater for different personality types in the same classroom?
- 7 If girls really are better at L2 learning than boys, what could the reason be?

Further Reading

Main sources for this chapter are: Skehan (1989), *Individual Differences in Second-Language Learning*; Gardner (1985), *Social Psychology and Second Language Learning* and Singleton (1989), *Language Acquisition: The Age Factor*. Coverage from a psychologist's point of view can be found in Dornyei's (2005), *The Psychology of the Language Learner*.

A List of Individual Variables in Classroom Second Language Acquisition

age: the age of the learner is controversially linked to second language acquisition success, usually expressed as age of onset, i.e. the time when L2 learning started.

- analytic learners:** rely on grammatical sensitivity rather than memory.
- aptitude:** the ability to learn the second language in an academic classroom.
- cognitive style:** is a person's typical ways of thinking, seen as a continuum between field-dependent (FD) and field-independent styles.
- even learners:** rely on both grammatical sensitivity and memory.
- extrovert and introvert:** people's personalities vary between those who relate to objects outside themselves (extroverts) and those who relate to the contents of their own minds (introverts).
- field-dependent (FD):** cognitive style, which relates to context.
- field-independent (FI):** style, in which thinking is independent of context.
- instrumental motivation:** learning the language for a career goal or other practical reason.
- integrative motivation:** learning the language in order to take part in the culture of its people.
- intelligence:** this seems to go with success at school and with success at other school subjects.
- level of first language:** how well you speak your first language is believed to go with how well you learn a second.
- memory-based learners:** rely on their memory rather than grammatical sensitivity.
- motivation:** 'the extent to which the individual works or strives to learn the language because of a desire to do so and the satisfaction experienced in this activity' (Gardner, 1985).
- sex differences:** when language teaching is voluntary, it is often seen as a 'woman's subject'.
- social class:** motivation associated with class can affect second language learning.

8 The L2 User and the Native Speaker

Box 8.1 Questions for L2 Users

Do you use:

- the two languages in different situations or in the same situation?
- the two languages to different people or the same people?
- the L1 at the same time as the L2, e.g. by translating?
- codeswitching from one language to another during the course of a conversation?

Do you feel using two languages has:

- social advantages or disadvantages?
- mental advantages or disadvantages?

Are you jealous of native speakers?

Do you feel you are losing your first language?

This chapter brings together themes about the relationship between people who know more than one language and monolingual native speakers. Are L2 users and monolingual native speakers different types of people? If so, what should be the proper goals of students of second languages and how does this affect how they should be taught? These issues have been debated with great passion. The views here broadly come from within the multi-competence perspective outlined in Chapters 1 and 10. This chapter concentrates on the L2 user as an individual, Chapter 9 on L2 users as part of communities, though there are inevitable overlaps.

8.1. What Is Special about L2 Users?

Focusing Questions (see Box 8.1)

Keywords (teaching methods are glossed in the Chapter 1 list)

native speaker: 'a person who has spoken a certain language since early childhood' (McArthur, 1992).

L2 user: a person who uses more than one language, at whatever level, rather than someone who is only learning a language for future use (see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=22b4o8N9ta0>).

Let us then try to think of some of the distinctive features possessed by people who speak more than one language, whom we will call 'L2 users'. In what ways are they different from people who speak only one language?

Box 8.2 Teachers' Goals for Language Teaching

Japan: Teachers in Japan target the language learning goal for their future, both seeking for jobs in the country and working abroad. However, most students take it for passing the entrance exams.

Saudi Arabia: Saudi teachers try to (with a consideration of their capabilities) make learners able to achieve the goals of each individual course in order for learners to be able to pass their courses, with an increasing emerging focus on the communicative aspect of teaching, which concerns learners' future for getting jobs or using the language overseas.

Poland: To allow students to communicate freely in most situations (including those of a professional nature). To be successful in national exams.

China: The main goals that English teachers are trying to achieve are 1) to help students achieve fluency in English communication (both oral and written) and English reading; 2) to help students develop cultural awareness and then to think globally. All the goals concern the students' future lives.

- *L2 users' knowledge of the second language is not the same as that of native speakers.* Students and teachers are frustrated by their inability to speak like natives. Very few people are ever satisfied by their L2 proficiency. Even bilinguals who can pass for native speakers still differ from native speakers in subtle ways; Coppetiers (1987) found that Americans living in France as bilinguals gave slightly different answers to questions about French from native speakers even if none of their colleagues had noticed

their French was deficient. Only a small proportion of L2 learners can ever pass for natives. SLA research should be concerned with the typical achievement of L2 learners in their own right rather than with that of the handful of exceptional individuals who can mimic native speakers.

- *L2 users' knowledge of their first language is not the same as that of monolingual native speakers.* People's intuitions of their first language, their processing of sentences and even their gestures are affected to some extent by the second language that they know. While everyday experience clearly shows that the second language has an effect on the first, this is only now starting to be researched; see for example *The Effects of the Second Language on the First* (Cook, 2003). Chapter 4 reports that French and Spanish learners of English have their Voice Onset Time affected by their knowledge of English, so that to some extent they have a single system they use in both languages. English speakers of Japanese use *aizuchi* (nodding for agreement) when talking English (Locastro, 1987). Experiments with syntax have shown unexpected effects on the first language from knowing a second language. Hartsuiker et al. (2004) found for instance that hearing passives in one language increased their production when using another language.
- *L2 users think in different ways to monolinguals.* Learning another language makes people think more flexibly, increases language awareness and leads to better attitudes towards other cultures. Indeed these have often been seen as among the educational benefits of acquiring another language. English children who learn Italian for an hour a week learn to read more rapidly in English (Yelland, Pollard and Mercuri, 1993).

All in all, learning another language changes people in many ways. The languages exist side by side in the same person, affecting not only the two languages but also the person as a whole. Acquiring a second language does not mean acquiring the self-contained language system of a monolingual but gaining a second language system that fits in with the first in the same mind.

8.2. The L2 User versus the Native Speaker in Language Teaching

Focusing Questions

- Should L2 learners aim to speak like native speakers?
- What kind of role do non-native speakers have in the coursebook you are most familiar with? Powerful successful people? Or ignorant tourists and near-beginner students?

A central issue in SLA research and language teaching is the concept of the native speaker. But what is a native speaker? One of the first uses of the term is by Leonard Bloomfield: 'The first language a human being learns to speak is his *native language*; he is a *native speaker* of this language' (Bloomfield, 1933,

p. 43). Being a native speaker in this sense is a straightforward matter of the history of the individual; the first language you encounter as a baby is your native language. A typical modern definition is 'a person who has spoken a certain language since early childhood' (McArthur, 1992). You can no more change the historical fact of which language you spoke first than you can change the mother who brought you up. Any later-learned language cannot be a native language by definition; your second language will never be your native language regardless of how long or how well you speak it.

A second way of defining native speakers is to list the components that make them up. David Stern (1983) lists characteristics such as a subconscious knowledge of rules and creativity of language use: native speakers know the language without being able to verbalise their knowledge; they can produce new sentences they have not heard before. L2 learners may be able to acquire some of these components of the native speaker state. L2 users also know many aspects of the second language subconsciously rather than consciously; L2 users are capable of saying new things in a second language, for example the 'surrealistic aphorisms' of French-speaking Marcel Duchamps such as 'My niece is cold because my knees are cold' (Sanquillet and Peterson, 1978, p. 111), let alone the writings of Nabakov or Conrad. Yet the question is still whether it is feasible or desirable for the L2 user to match the components of the native speaker.

Box 8.3 Social Attractiveness of 34 Accents for British People

- 1 Standard English
- 2 Accent identical to own
- 3 Southern Irish
- 4 Scottish
- 5 Edinburgh
- 6 New Zealand
- 7 Queen's English
- 8 Cornish
- 9 West Country
- 10 Newcastle upon Tyne
- 11 French
- 12 Northern Irish
- ...
- 32 German
- 33 Black Country
- 34 Birmingham

Source: Coupland and Bishop (2007)

A third approach to defining native speaker brings in language identity: your speech shows who you are. In English a word or two notoriously gives away many aspects of our identity. According to George Bernard Shaw, 'It is impossible for an Englishman to open his mouth without making some other Englishman hate or despise him'. Our speech shows the groups that we belong to, as we see in Chapter 4, whether in terms of age (I still say 'wireless' meaning 'radio', rather than meaning a cable-free piece of equipment), gender (men prefer to pronounce '-ing' endings such as 'running' as /ɪn/, women as /ɪŋ/ (Adamson and Regan, 1991), as seen in ad slogans like 'A sippin' whiskey'), or religion (the abbreviation of 'William' to 'Bill' or 'Liam' in Northern Ireland gives away whether the person is Catholic or Protestant). An English linguist once observed 'it is part of the meaning of an American to sound like one' (Firth, 1951).

We may be proud or ashamed of belonging to a particular group: politicians in England try to shed signs of their origins by adopting RP as best they can; British pop and folk singers take on American-like vowels. Being a native speaker shows identification with a group of speakers, membership of a language community. In social terms, people have as much right to join the group of native speakers and to adopt a new identity as they have to change identity in any other way. But the native speaker group is only one of the groups that a speaker belongs to and not of overriding importance; how important is it to be a native speaker of a language compared to being a believer in a religion, a parent or a supporter of Newcastle United?

The definitions of native speaker are not then helpful for language teachers. In the sense of the first language in someone's life, it is impossible for students to become native speakers of a second language. The components definition raises the issue of whether students should be trained to be like native speakers; this limits the components they try to those that monolingual native speaker possess rather than the additional skills of L2 users, such as codeswitching or translation. In terms of identity, it raises the question of which group we wish the students to belong to—the community of native speakers of which they can never be full members or the communities of L2 users? According to Ben Rampton (1990), language loyalty can be a matter either of *inheritance* (language is something you inherit, you claim and you bequeath) or of *affiliation* (a language is something you belong to), both of them continually negotiated.

Should the Native Speaker Be the Target of Language Teaching?

Most language teachers, and indeed most students, accept that their goal is to become as similar to the native speaker as possible. *Outcomes* (Dellar and Walkley, 2011) even features little boxes labelled 'Native Speaker English', describing say the use of 'You don't want to' or 'a bug'. One problem is the question of *which* native speaker. A language comes in many varieties according to country, region, class, sex, profession and other factors; this is

then to do with the Lang₂ abstract entity meaning of 'language' mentioned in Chapter 1. Some varieties are a matter of accent, some of social and regional dialect. Box 8.3 shows how British speakers evaluate some of the accents they encounter, rating 'Standard English' most highly, Birmingham (Brummie) least.

The student's target needs to relate to the roles that they will assume when using the second language. Some British students I knew in London were going for job experience in Switzerland; my colleagues accordingly taught them Swiss German. When they used this on the shop-floor, their fellow-workers found it highly entertaining: foreigners are expected to speak High German, not Swiss German. I was an L2 user of Swiss German as a child and can still comprehend it reasonably—provided the person speaking does not see me as a foreigner and switch to High German.

The problems of which variety to teach is more pressing for a language that is used globally such as English. England alone contains a variety of class and regional accents even if vocabulary varies little; the English-speaking countries from Australia to Canada, Scotland to South Africa, each have their own variety with its own internal range; outside these countries there are well-established varieties of English spoken in countries such as Singapore and India. Which of these native speakers should the students adopt as a role model? Formerly the aimed-at British accent was RP (Received Pronunciation) spoken by a small minority of 'educated' people even in England; my students in Newcastle upon Tyne grumble that they never hear it outside the classroom. The claimed advantages of RP were that, despite its small number of speakers based in a single country, it was comprehensible everywhere and had neutral connotations in terms of class and region. True as this may be, it does sound like the classic last-ditch defence of the powerful status form against the rest. A more realistic native accent nowadays might be Estuary English, encountered in Chapter 4.

Though much of this variation may be a matter of accent, reading an American novel soon shows the different conventions whether in vocabulary (the piece of furniture called a 'credenza' is known as a 'dresser' in England), spelling (the same hesitation noise in speech is spelled 'uh' in American English and 'er' in British English, because of the silent <r>s in RP) or grammar (British 'I dived' versus American 'I dove'). So far as language teaching is concerned, there is no single ideal native speaker for all students to imitate; the choice of model has to take all sorts of variation into account.

However, if L2 users are not the same as monolinguals, as we have been arguing all along, whether in the languages they know or in the rest of their minds, it is inappropriate to base language teaching on the native speaker model since it may, on the one hand frustrate the students, who soon appreciate they will never be the same as native speakers, on the other limit them to the activities of monolinguals rather than open up for them the richness of multilingual use. If we want students to become efficient L2 users, not imitation native

speakers, the situations modelled in coursebooks should include examples of successful L2 users on which the students can model themselves. The Japanese syllabus puts forward a goal of forming 'the foundation of pupils' communication abilities through foreign languages', not imitation native speaker (MEXT, 2011). Similarly the Israeli curriculum 'does not take on the goal of producing near-native speakers of English, but rather speakers of Hebrew, Arabic or other languages who can function comfortably in English whenever it is appropriate' (English Curriculum, Revised, 2013).

Successful L2 use is almost totally absent from textbooks. In some courses students have to compare different cultures. In *Move* (Bowler and Parminster, 2007) students discuss 'Do men or women usually do these jobs in your country?', linked to cartoons of a chef, a ballet dancer, a soldier, and so on; in *speakout* (Eales and Oakes, 2012, p. 20) students discuss appropriate gifts for people in different countries. Most coursebooks use England as a backcloth but they seldom present multilingual English people. *English Unlimited* (2010) introduces an 'Italian' manager of a New York restaurant, a 'Jamaican' manager of an Edinburgh supermarket and an 'Estonian' manager of a Paris hotel; it is not clear whether these are in fact American, UK or French citizens and they are obviously part of the linguistic minorities common in the catering and hotel industries. By the end of a language course, students will never have heard L2 users talking to native speakers, let alone to other L2 users, important as this may be to their goals. When they have finished *English Unlimited* (Doff, 2010), a course aiming at 'global communication', the students will have encountered many people proclaiming their identities—'I'm a student. I'm at university in Hong Kong.' Yet they will have met hardly anyone who is using a second language successfully for purposes other than being a student.

The characters that are supposedly L2 users fall into two main categories: tourists and visitors, who ignorantly ask the way, desperately buy things or try to fathom strange travel systems, and students, who chat to each other about their lives and interests. Both groups use perfectly adequate English for their activities; nothing distinguishes them from the native speakers portrayed in the pages except that their names are Birgit, Klaus or Philippe (Richards, 1998), or Ali, Luis or Alejandro (Doff, 2010).

Nor is it only English. Coursebooks for teaching other languages such as *Libre Echange* (Courtyllon and de Salins, 1995) or *Italian Now* (Danesi, 2012) present L2 users similarly. L2 users have an unflatteringly powerless status rather than the extra influence that successful L2 users can wield. The students never see an L2 user in action who knows what they are doing. While the roles of students or of visitors are useful and relevant, they are hardly an adequate reflection of what L2 use can provide. Looking at most EFL and modern language coursebooks, you get the distinct impression that all of them are written by monolinguals who have no idea of the lives lived by L2 users.

Box 8.4 The Native Speaker

Many definitions of native speaker exist based on birth, knowledge and use.

Since languages have many different types of native speaker, if teaching takes the native speaker as the target it still has to decide which native speaker.

Under the usual definition of 'a person who has spoken a certain language since early childhood', it is not possible for a second language learner to become a native speaker and this is not a possible measure of L2 success.

8.3. Codeswitching by Second Language Users**Focusing Questions**

- When have you heard one person using two languages in the course of the same conversation or the same sentence?
- Is it polite to code-switch?
- Should students ever switch languages in mid-sentence?

Keywords

codeswitching: going from one language to the other in mid-speech when both speakers know the same two languages.

bilingual/monolingual modes: in bilingual mode, the L2 user uses two languages; in monolingual mode, a single language, whether their first or second.

The danger of concentrating on the native speaker is that the specific characteristics of L2 users are ignored. L2 users can do things that monolingual native speakers cannot. One example is the song *Mustapha*, given in the box, which was a world-wide hit from numerous singers.

Box 8.5 Singapore Song 'Mustapha' Mbaye Faye

Cherie je t'aime, cherie je t'adore (French)

My darling I love you a lot more than you know (English)

Cherie je t'aime, cherie je t'adore (French)

My darling I love you a lot more than you know (English)

Oh Mustapha, Oh Mustapha

Yen Kathalan (Tamil) my Mr Mustapha (English)

Sayang, saying (Malay) *na chew sher wo ai ni* (Mandarin)

Will you, will you fall in love with me? (English)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2pE0T07zs5s>

We are limiting the students' horizons if we only teach them what native speakers can do. An example is a process peculiar to using a second language, namely codeswitching from one language to another. To illustrate codeswitching, here are some sentences recorded by Zubaidah Hakim in a staff-room where Malaysian teachers of English were talking to each other:

- 'Suami saya dulu slim and trim tapi sekarang plump like drum' (Before my husband was slim and trim but now he is plump like a drum).
- 'Jadi I tanya, how can you say that when . . . geram betul I' (So I asked how can you say that when . . . I was so mad).
- 'Hero you tak datang hari ni' (Your hero did not come today).

One moment there is a phrase or word in English, the next a phrase or word in Bahasa Malaysia. Sometimes the switch between languages occurs between sentences rather than within them. It is often hard to say which is the main language of such a conversation or indeed of an individual sentence.

Box 8.6 Examples of Codeswitching between Languages

Spanish/English: 'Todos los Mexicanos *were riled up*' (All the Mexicans were riled up).

Dutch/English: 'Ik heb een kop *of tea, tea or something*' (I had a cup of tea or something).

Tok Pisin/English: 'Lapun man ia cam na tok, "*oh yu poor pussiket*"' (The old man came and said 'you poor pussycat').

Japanese/English: 'She *wa* took her a month to come home *yo*'.

Greek/English: 'Simera piga sto *shopping centre* gia na psaksw ena *birthday present* gia thn Maria' (Today I went to the *shopping centre* because I wanted to buy a *birthday present* for Maria).

English/German/Italian: 'Pinker is of the opinion that the man is singled out as, singled out as, *was?*, as *ein Mann, der reden kann*, singled out as *una specie*, as a species which can . . .'

German/English: 'Eurostrand macht *happy*' (Eurostrand makes you happy), advertisement on the side of a German train.

French/English: 'Into a *chalice* not a glass *C'est cidre*, not cider', UK poster for Stella Artois cider.

English/Italian/French:

'London Bridge is falling down

Poi s'ascose nel foco che gli affina

O swallow swallow

Le Prince d'Aquitaine á la touwwr aboli'

(T.S. Eliot, *The Waste Land*, V)

Codeswitching is found wherever bilingual speakers talk to each other. According to François Grosjean (1989), bilinguals have two modes for using language. In **monolingual mode** they speak either one language or the other; in **bilingual mode** they use two languages simultaneously by codeswitching from one to the other during the course of speech. Bilingual codeswitching is neither unusual nor abnormal; it is an ordinary fact of life in many multilingual societies. Codeswitching is a unique feat of using two languages at once which no monolingual can ever achieve, except to the limited extent that people can switch between dialects of their first language. The following box gives some examples of codeswitching drawn from diverse sources, which also demonstrates its utter respectability by occurring in perhaps the most celebrated twentieth century poem in English, *The Waste Land*.

The interesting questions about codeswitching are why and when it happens. A common reason for switching is to report what someone has said, as when a girl who is telling a story switches from Tok Pisin (spoken in Papua New Guinea) to English to report what the man said: 'Lapun man ia cam na tok, "oh yu poor pussiket"' (The old man came and said 'you poor pussycat'). In one sense, whenever a book cites sentences in other languages or whenever T.S. Eliot used quotations from other languages, it is codeswitching.

Box 8.7 Reasons for Codeswitching

- 1 reporting someone else's speech
- 2 interjecting
- 3 highlighting particular information
- 4 switching to a topic more suitable for one language
- 5 changing the speaker's role
- 6 qualifying the topic
- 7 singling out one person to direct speech at
- 8 ignorance of a form in one language

A second reason for switching is to use markers from one language to highlight something in another. The Japanese/English 'She wa took her a month to come home yo' uses 'wa' to indicate what is being talked about, its function in Japanese.

Another reason is the feeling that some topics are more appropriate to one language than another. Mexican Americans, for example, prefer to talk about money in English rather than in Spanish—'La consulta era (the visit cost) eight dollars.' One of my Malaysian students told me that she could express romantic feelings in English but not in Bahasa Malaysia, supported by Indians I have met who prefer English for such emotions—English as the language of romance is a bit surprising to an Englishman!

Sometimes the reason for codeswitching is that the choice of language shows the speaker's social role. A Kenyan man who was serving his own sister in a shop started in their Luyia dialect and then switched to Swahili for the rest of the conversation to signal that he was treating her as an ordinary customer. Often bilinguals use fillers and tags from one language in another, as in the Spanish/English exchange 'Well I'm glad to meet you', 'Andale pues and do come again' (OK swell . . .).

The common factor underlying these examples is that the speaker assumes the listener is fluent in the two languages. Otherwise such sentences would not be a bilingual codeswitching mode of language use but would be either interlanguage communication strategies or attempts at one-up-manship, similar to the use by some English speakers of Latin expressions such as 'ab initio learners of Spanish' (Spanish beginners). Monolinguals think that the reason is primarily ignorance; you switch when you don't know the word, i.e. it is a communication strategy of the type mentioned in Chapter 6; yet this motivation seems rare in the descriptions of codeswitching. Box 8.7 lists some reasons people code-switch, including most of those mentioned here.

When does codeswitching occur in terms of language structure? According to one set of calculations about 84% of switches within the sentence are isolated words, say the English/Malaysian 'Ana free hari ini' (Ana is free today), where English is switched to only for the item 'free'. About 10% are phrases, as in the Russian/French 'Imela une femme de chambre' (She had a chambermaid). The remaining 6% are switches for whole clauses, as in the German/English 'Papa, wenn du das Licht ausmachst, then I'll be so lonely' (Daddy, if you put out the light, I'll be so lonely). But this still does not show when switches are possible from one language to another; switching is very far from random in linguistic terms.

The theory of codeswitching developed by Shona Poplack (1980) claims that there are two main restrictions on where switching can occur:

- **the 'free morpheme constraint'.** The speaker may not switch language between a word and its endings unless the word is pronounced as if it were in the language of the ending. Thus an English/Spanish switch 'runeando' is impossible because 'run' is distinctively English in sound. But 'flipeando' is possible because 'flip' is potentially a word in Spanish.
- **the 'equivalence constraint'.** The switch can come at a point in the sentence where it does not violate the grammar of either language. So there are unlikely to be any French/English switches such as 'a car americaine' or 'une American voiture', as they would be wrong in both languages. It is possible, however, to have the French/English switch 'J'ai acheté an American car' (I bought an American car), because both English and French share the structure in which the object follows the verb.

The approach to codeswitching that has been most influential recently is the Matrix Language Frame (MLF) model developed by Carol Myers-Scotton

(2005). She claims that in codeswitching the Matrix Language provides the frame, the Embedded Language provides material to fill out the frame, rather like putting the flesh onto the skeleton. So in 'Simera piga sto *shopping centre* gia na psaksw ena *birthday present* gia thn Maria', the Matrix Language is Greek which provides the grammatical structure, the Embedded Language is English which provides two noun phrases. The role for the Matrix Language is to provide the grammatical structures and the 'system' morphemes, i.e. grammatical morphemes that form the basis of the sentence. The role of the Embedded Language is to provide content morphemes to fit into the framework already supplied. For example the Russian/English sentence 'On dolgo laia-l na *dog-ov*' (He barked at dogs for a long time) shows matrix Russian grammatical morphemes and structure but an embedded English content word 'dog' (Schmitt, 2010).

The later version of this model (Myers-Scotton and Jake, 2000) is known as the 4M Model as it divides all morphemes into four types:

- **content morphemes** which have thematic roles, typically nouns such as 'book' and verbs such as 'read'
- **early system morphemes** which have some content meaning such as articles 'the/a', '(chew) up'
- **late bridge system morphemes** which make necessary connections between grammatical parts but contribute no meaning, say 'the Wife of Bath', or possessive 's' 'John's friend'
- **late outsider system morphemes** which have connections extending beyond the basic lexical unit, such as agreement 's'; 'Tomorrow never comes'

(Note that 'early' and 'late' apply to the processes of language production, not to the stages of language acquisition.)

According to the 4M model, content and, to a large extent, early system morphemes go with the Embedded Language in depending on meaning. The late bridge and outsider system morphemes go with the Matrix Language as they provide the grammatical framework within which the content and early system morphemes can be placed.

Codeswitching and Language Teaching

What does codeswitching have to do with language teaching? The profile of the proficient L2 user includes the codeswitching mode of language. It is not something that is peculiar or unusual. If the bilingual knows that the listener shares the same two languages, codeswitching is likely to take place for all the reasons given above. For many students the ability to go from one language to another is highly desirable; there is little advantage in being multi-competent if you are restricted by the demands of a single language in monolingual mode.

A simple point to make to students is indeed that codeswitching between two people who both know the same two languages is normal. There is a half-feeling that people who switch are doing something wrong, either demonstrating their poor knowledge of the L2 or deliberate rudeness to other people present who may not be able to join in, as we see in the figure below. This seems particularly true of children in England. This feeling is not helped by the pressure against codeswitching in many classrooms, as we see in the next section. Occasionally codeswitching may indeed be used for concealment from a third party. However this may be to preserve the niceties of polite conversation: Philip, a seven-year-old French/English speaker, switches to French to his mother in front of an English guest to request to go to the loo: 'Maman, j'ai envie de faire pipi' (Mummy, I need to have a wee). Too long has codeswitching been seen as something reprehensible—young children who use switching are doing something terrible—they can't keep their languages separate!—rather than something completely natural and indeed highly skilled, as Fred Genesee (2002) points out. Codeswitching is a normal ability of L2 users in everyday situations and can be utilised even by children as young as 2.

The Institute of Linguists' examinations in Languages for International Communication test (Institute of Linguists, 2008), sadly discontinued in 2004, assessed whether candidates can mediate between two languages. At beginners' level this may be reading an L2 travel brochure or listening to L2 answerphone messages to get information that can be used in the first language. At advanced stages it might be researching a topic through reading and conducting interviews in order to write a report. To take an Italian example, students are told they are working for an English charity that needs a report on immigration. They are given a dossier in advance of newspaper articles etc on the topic in Italian. On the day of the test they are given a task—brief listing points that they should cover; they then have to interview someone

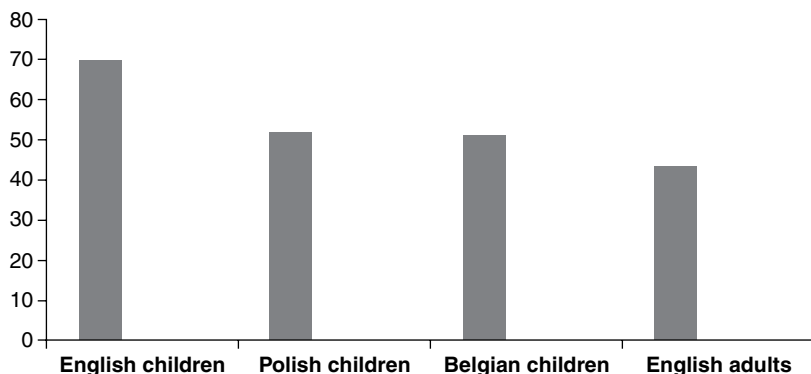


Figure 8.1 Percentage considering codeswitching rude.

in Italian for 15 minutes to establish the information; finally they have two hours to write up a professional report in English based on the dossiers and the interview. In this international use of a second language, the L2 learner is not becoming an imitation native speaker but is someone who can stand between the two languages, using both when appropriate. While this is not in itself codeswitching, it involves the same element of having two languages readily available rather than functioning exclusively in one or the other.

But codeswitching proper can also be exploited as part of actual teaching methodology. For example the *New Crown English* course in Japan uses some codeswitching in dialogues (Takahashi, 2012). When the teacher knows the language of the students, whether or not the teacher is a native speaker, the classroom itself often becomes a codeswitching situation. The lesson starts in the first language, or the control of the class takes place through the first language, or it slips in in other ways. In a sense codeswitching is natural in the classroom if the teacher and students share the same languages: the classroom is an L2 user situation with two or more languages always present and it is a pretence that it is a monolingual L2 situation; at best one of the two languages is invisible. Use of the L1 in the classroom is developed in the next section.

Rodolpho Jacobson developed the *New Concurrent Approach* (Jacobson and Faltis, 1990), which gets teachers to balance the use of the two languages within a single lesson. The teacher is allowed to switch languages at certain key points. In a class where English is being taught to Spanish-speaking children, the teacher can switch to Spanish when concepts are important, when the students are getting distracted, or when the student should be praised or told off. The teacher may also switch to English when revising a lesson that has already been given in Spanish. The codeswitching is then highly controlled in this method. An ingenious exercise in *Using the Mother Tongue* (Dellar and Rinvoluceri, 2002) suggests having rules for when the L1 can be used in the classroom such as when holding a particular object such as a dictionary or a stone, being in a particular place like near the window, carrying out a particular action like folding their arms, and so on.

Box 8.8 Codeswitching Exercise

Look at the list of reasons for codeswitching in Box 8.7 and then say which applies to each of these examples of codeswitching, taken from a variety of sources.

- 1 English-Swedish: *Peaken* var inte bra på *spotmarknaden*. (The peak was not good on the spot market.)
- 2 English-Spanish: But I wanted to fight her *con los puños*, you know. (But I wanted to fight her with my fists, you know.)
- 3 French-English: *Tu dévisses le bouchon . . . comme ça, et tu squirt.* ('You unscrew the cap . . . like this, and you squirt'.)

- 4 English-Spanish: No van a *bring it up in the meeting*. (They're not going to bring it up in the meeting.)
- 5 French/Swedish Mother: *Tu reprendras un peu de ca?* (Would you like some more?) Emily to her mother in Swedish: Jag tror inte att hon tycker om det. (I don't think she likes it.)
- 6 Russian-French: Imela *une femme de chambre*. (She had a chambermaid.)
- 7 Greek/English: Ήμουν βιβλιοθήκη και ήθελα να <άρω corycard και λέω 'five pound phonecard please'. (I was at the library and I wanted to buy a corycard and I say 'five pound phonecard please'.)
- 8 Hindi-English: Maine bahut bardas kiya hai *but now it's getting too much*. (I have withstood a lot but . . .)
- 9 English-Spanish: So you *todavía* haven't decided *lo que vas a hacer* next week. (So you still haven't decided what you're going to do next week.)

Box 8.9 L2 Learning and Codeswitching

Codeswitching is the use of two languages within the same conversation, often when the speaker is:

- reporting what someone has said.
- highlighting something.
- discussing certain topics.
- emphasising a particular social role.

Codeswitching consists of 84% single word switches, 10% phrases, and 6% clauses.

8.4. Using the First Language in the Classroom

Focusing Questions

- When did you last use or encounter the L1 in the L2 classroom?
- Do you think it was a good idea or a bad one?
- When do you think the first language could be used profitably in the classroom? How?

Keyword

compound and coordinate bilinguals: compound bilinguals link the two languages in their minds; coordinate bilinguals keep them apart.

Though the teaching methods popular in the twentieth century differed in many ways, they nearly all tried to avoid relying on the students' first language in the classroom. The only exceptions were the grammar-translation academic style of teaching, discussed in Chapter 11, which still survives despite the bad press it has always received, and the short-lived reading method in United States in the 1930s. But everything else from the direct method to the audiolingual method to task-based learning has insisted that the less the first language is used in the classroom the better the teaching.

Box 8.10 Nigeria

'Every child should have the right to choose when she wants to use the mother tongue in all official situations'.

(Agbede, Krisagbedo and Eze, 2012, p. 170)

Box 8.11 Teachers' Views: What Do Teachers Use the Students' First Language for in the Classroom?

Saudi: Many functions: linguistic (providing equivalent words in L1, clarifications), social (greetings), classroom management functions (changing students' setting) and metalinguistic functions (talking about a task before conducting it).

Poland: For discipline, to clarify things, explain difficult language aspects.

Japan: To explain the grammar, to tell what to do clearly, to scold pupils when they are naughty.

China: The main function of the use of students L1 in my classroom is to clarify the difficult and complicated concepts.

In the early days the first language was explicitly rejected, a legacy of the language teaching revolutions of the late nineteenth century. Later the first language was seldom mentioned as a tool for the classroom, apart from occasional advice about how to avoid it, for example in task-based learning for beginners: 'Don't ban mother-tongue use but encourage attempts to use the target language' (Willis, 1996, p. 130). The UK National Curriculum has emphasised this in such dicta as: 'The natural use of the target language for virtually all communication is a sure sign of a good modern language course' (DES, 1990, p. 58). According to Franklin (1990), 90% of teachers think it is important to teach in the target language.

Box 8.12 The View of a Bilingual Academic

I have never known what language I spoke first, Arabic or English, or which one was really mine beyond any doubt. What I do know, however, is that the two have always been together in my life, one resonating in the other, sometimes ironically, sometimes nostalgically, most often each correcting, and commenting on, the other. Each can seem like my absolutely first language, but neither is.

(Edward Said, 1999)

One question is then how often teachers and students actually use the first language in the classroom. The European Survey on Language Competencies (Eurostat, 2013) asked how often people used the L2 in the classroom based on a scale from 0 (Never) to 4 (Always). This is obviously not the same question, and it needs to be mentioned, first, that teachers are unlikely to admit in public how often they use the L1 given official attitudes against it and, second, that questionnaires only report what people say they do, not what they actually do.

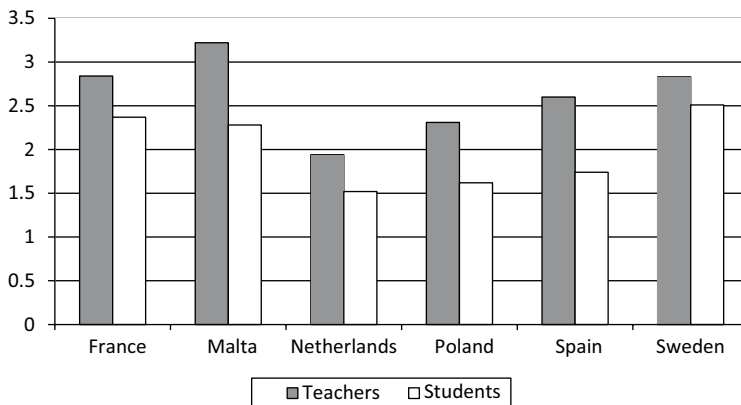


Figure 8.2 Frequency of L2 use in the classroom.

Fig 8.2 shows responses varied in these sample countries for teachers from 3.22 (usually) in Malta to 1.94 (every now and then) in the Netherlands and for students from 2.37 in France to 1.52 in the Netherlands. The scores do seem to go together; that is to say the more teachers say they use the L2, the more students say they do. Despite the pressure against the L1 and the direct teaching method tradition, both teachers and students admit to a fair amount of L1 use in the classroom.

Arguments for Avoiding the First Language

While avoidance of the first language is taken for granted by almost all teachers and is implicit in most books for teachers, the reasons are rarely stated. One is that the teacher's language can be the prime model for true communicative use of the second language. Coming into a classroom of non-English-speaking students and saying 'Good morning' seems like a real use of language for communicative purposes. Explaining grammar in English—'When you want to talk about something that is still relevant to the present moment use the present perfect'—provides genuine information for the student through the second language. Telling the students 'Turn your chairs round so that you are in groups of four' gives them real instructions to carry out. Hearing this through the first language would deprive the students of genuine experience of interaction through the second language. The use of the second language for everyday classroom communication sets a tone for the class that influences much that happens.

Yet using the second language throughout the lesson may make the class seem less real. Instead of the actual situation of a group of people trying to get to grips with a second language, there is a pretend monolingual situation. The first language has become an invisible and scorned element in the classroom. The students are acting like imitation native speakers of the second language rather than true L2 users.

The practical justification for avoiding the first language in many English language teaching situations is that the students speak several first languages and it would be impossible for the teacher to take account of all of them. Hence hardly any British-produced EFL coursebooks use the first language at all. EFL materials produced in particular countries such as Japan or Greece where most students speak a common first language are not restricted in this way. In the EFL context many expatriate language teachers often do not speak the first language of the students and so the L2 is unavoidable. But this is more an argument about desirable qualities for teachers than about the type of teaching students should receive; an L2 teacher who cannot use a second language may not be the best role model for the students.

The practical reasons for avoiding the first language in a multilingual class do not justify its avoidance in classes with a single first language. It is hard to find explicit reasons being given for avoiding the first language in these circumstances. The implicit reasons seem to be twofold:

- *It does not happen in first language acquisition.* Children acquiring their first language do not have another language to fall back on, by definition except in the case of early simultaneous bilingualism. So L2 learners would ideally acquire the second language in the same way as children without reference to another language.
- *The two languages should be kept separate in the mind.* To develop a second language properly means learning to use it independently of the first

language and eventually to 'think' in it. Anything which keeps the two languages apart is therefore beneficial to L2 learning.

Neither of these arguments has any particular justification from SLA research. There are indeed many parallels between first and second language acquisition, since both learning processes take place in the same human mind. Yet the many obvious differences in terms of age and situation can affect these processes. The presence of another language in the mind of the L2 learner is an unalterable difference from first language acquisition: there is no way in which the two processes can be equated. If the first language is to be avoided in teaching, this ban must be based on other reasons than the way in which children learn their first language.

The argument assumes that the first and the second languages are in different parts of the mind. An early distinction in SLA research made by Uriel Weinreich (1953) contrasted **compound bilinguals** who link the two languages in their minds with **coordinate bilinguals** who keep them apart. Thus the policy of avoiding the first language assumes that the only valid form of L2 learning is coordinate bilingualism. Even within Weinreich's ideas, this would exclude the compound bilinguals. But mostly the distinction between compound and coordinate bilinguals has been watered down because of evidence that the two languages are very far from separate. However distinct the two languages are in theory, in practice they are interwoven in terms of phonology, vocabulary, syntax and sentence processing, as seen in several chapters.

Ernesto Macaro (1997) observed a number of modern language teachers at work in classrooms in England to see when they used the first language. He found five factors that most commonly led to L1 use:

- *using the first language for giving instructions about activities*. As mentioned above, the teacher has to balance the gains and losses of using the first or the second language. Some teachers resort to the first language after they have tried in vain to get the activity going in the second language.
- *translating and checking comprehension*. Teachers felt the L1 'speeded things up'.
- *individual comments to students*, made while the teacher is going round the class, say during pairwork.
- *giving feedback to pupils*. Students are often told whether they are right or wrong in their own language. Presumably the teacher feels that this makes it more 'real'.
- *using the first language to maintain discipline*. Saying 'Shut up or you will get a detention' in the first language shows that it is a serious threat rather than practicing imperative and conditional constructions. One class reported that their teacher slipped into the first language 'if it's something really bad!'.

In terms of frequency Carole Franklin (1990) found that over 80% of teachers used the first language for explaining grammar and for discussing objectives;

over 50% for tests, correcting written work, and teaching background; under 16% for organising the classroom and activities and for chatting informally.

SLA research provides no reason why any of these activities is not a perfectly rational use of the first language in the classroom. If twenty-first century teaching is to continue to accept the ban on the first language imposed by the late nineteenth century, it will have to look elsewhere for its rationale. As Swain and Lapkin (2000) put it, 'To insist that no use be made of the L1 in carrying out tasks that are both linguistically and cognitively complex is to deny the use of an important cognitive tool.'

Teaching That Uses the First Language

A few minority methods during the twentieth century other than the shunned grammar-translation method indeed tried to systematise the use of the first language in the classroom. One possibility that has been tried can be called **alternating language methods**. These depend on the presence of native speakers of two languages in the classroom so that in some way the students learn each others' languages. In **reciprocal language teaching** students switch language at predetermined points (Hawkins, 1987; Cook, 1989). The method pairs students who want to learn each other's languages and makes them alternate between the two languages, thus exchanging the roles of teacher and student. My own experience of this was on a summer course that paired French teachers of English with English teachers of French and alternated between England and France each year. One day all the activities would take place in French, the next everything would be in English, and so on throughout the course. In my own case it was so effective that at the end of three weeks I was conversing with a French Inspector-General—a supreme authority figure for French teachers—without realising that I was using French. However while the method worked for me in France, when the course took place in England the next year, it seemed unnatural to use exclusively French.

Box 8.13 The Bilingual Method (C.J. Dodson, 1967)

- Step 1. Imitation.* Pupils learn to speak basic L2 sentences by imitating the teacher; listen to the teacher give L1 meaning.
- Step 2. Interpretation.* The teacher says L1 equivalent of L2 sentence; the pupil replies with L2 sentence, the teacher repeats L1.
- Step 3. Substitution and extension.* Same technique as (1) and (2) but varying the vocabulary within existing patterns.
- Step 4. Independent speaking of sentences.*
- Step 5. Reverse interpretation (optional).*
- Step 6. Consolidation of question patterns.*

Other variations on alternating language approaches are the **Key School Two-Way Model** in which classes of mixed English and Spanish speakers learn the curriculum through English in the morning and Spanish in the afternoon (Rhodes, Christian and Barfield, 1997), the **Alternate Days Approach** which teaches the standard curriculum subjects to children with native Pilipino using English and Pilipino on alternate days (Tucker, Otones and Sibayan, 1971) and **Dual Language Programs** in which a balance is struck between two languages in the school curriculum ranging from say 90% in the minority language versus 10% in the majority languages in the pre-school year to 70% versus 30% in second grade (Montague, 1997). These alternating methods are distinct from the bilingual 'immersion' French teaching programs developed in English-speaking Canada, which do not have mixed groups of native and non-native students.

More relevant to most language teaching situations are methods that actively create links between the first and the second language; some of these are discussed further in Chapter 11. The **New Concurrent Method** for example allows systematic codeswitching under the teacher's control. **Community Language Learning** (CLL) is an interesting variant which uses translation as a means of allowing genuine L2 use, described further in Chapter 11; the second language is learnt in continual conjunction with the first. The most developed is perhaps the **Bilingual Method** used in Wales, outlined in Box 8.13. In this the teacher reads an L2 sentence and gives its meaning in the first language, called 'interpreting' rather than 'translating', after which the students repeat in chorus and individually (Dodson, 1967). The teacher tests the students' understanding by saying the L1 sentence and pointing to a picture, though the students have to answer in the second language. The two languages are tied together in the students' minds through the meaning.

Some of the uses for the first language in the classroom, always provided that the teachers know the first language of the students, are:

- **explaining grammar to the students.** The FonF approach has curiously not discussed which language should be used for explaining grammar; Catherine Doughty's influential article on 'the cognitive underpinning of focus on form' (Doughty, 2001) does not once mention that a choice exists. If a French beginners course such as *Panorama* (Girardet and Cridlig, 1996) includes in Lesson 2 'La conjugaison pronominale', 'Construction avec l'infinif' and 'Les adjectifs possessifs et demonstratifs', what else are the students supposed to do but use the first language say via translation? The starter course *English Unlimited* (Doff, 2010) has a grammar reference section that uses terms such as 'present', 'questions', 'pronouns', 'possessive adjectives', 'singular and plural nouns', etc all drawn from mainstream EFL grammar. Without translation these are going to make little sense, particularly when the grammar of the student's own culture differs from the English school tradition, as is the case with Japanese students who do not have a concept of grammatical plural.

- **explaining tasks and exercises to the students.** If the task is crucial, then whichever language is used, the important thing is to get the students carrying out the task successfully as soon as possible. *Atlas 1* (Nunan, 1995) for example in Unit 3 has a task chain ‘talking about occupations’ involving the steps ‘1 Listen and circle the occupations you hear . . . 2 Listen again and check [4] the questions you hear . . .’ If the students can understand these instructions in the second language, they probably do not need the exercise. The teacher may find it highly convenient to fall back on the first language for explaining tasks.
- **students using the first language within classroom activities.** Teachers are often told to discourage students from using their first language in pair and group activities; ‘If they are talking in small groups it can be quite difficult to get some classes—particularly the less disciplined or motivated ones—to keep to the target language’ (Ur, 1996, p. 121). Yet codeswitching is a normal part of bilingual life in the world outside the classroom; it is the natural recourse of L2 users when they are together with people who share the same languages; stopping codeswitching in the classroom, which is what a ban on the L1 actually amounts to, is denying a central feature of many L2 situations. The students should not be made uncomfortable with a normal part of L2 use. Those working within the socio-cultural framework discussed in Chapter 12 have stressed how learning is a collaborative dialogue (Anton and DiCamilla, 1998); the first language can provide part of the scaffolding that goes with this dialogue.

Many other uses of the first language arise naturally in the classroom—keeping discipline, using bilingual dictionaries, administering tests, and many others. If there is no principled reason for avoiding the first language other than allowing the students to hear as much second language as possible, it may be more effective to resort to the first language in the classroom when needed. The book *Using the Mother Tongue* (Dellar and Rinvoluceri, 2002) has a variety of exercises for using the L1 in the classroom, many of which do not require the teacher to know the students’ language such as getting the students to introduce themselves to each other first in the L1, then in the L2.

Box 8.14 Ways of Using the L1 in the Classroom

A. Teacher conveying meaning

- teacher using L1 for conveying meaning of words or sentences
- teacher using L1 for explaining grammar

B. Teacher organising the class

- teacher using L1 for managing the classroom

- teacher using L1 for giving instructions for teaching activities
- L1 used for testing

C. Students using L1 within classroom

- students using L1 as part of main learning activity
- students using L1 incidentally within classroom activities

8.5. Do Native Speakers Make Better Language Teachers?

Focusing Questions

- Would you prefer to be taught by a native speaker teacher or a non-native speaker teacher? Why?
- What are the strengths of native speaker teachers? The weaknesses?
- What are the strengths of non-native speaker teachers? The weaknesses?

A divisive issue in many parts of the world is whether it is better for the teacher to be a native speaker or a non-native speaker. The job ads given in Box 8.15 show the emphasis that EFL recruiters place on native speakers. In many universities around the world, non-native language teachers find it harder to get permanent or full-time positions and are paid less than native speaker teachers. In UK universities it is usual for language teaching to be carried out by native speaker teachers, often on a teaching rather than an academic grade.

Box 8.15 Some Ads for EFL Teachers

In London

‘Qualified, native speaking English teachers’ (a centre in Northfields)

‘Please do not apply if you don’t have Native English Speaker Competency’ (University of East London)

‘The candidate should be a native speaker’ (the Shakespeare College ‘near Liverpool Street’)

Outside England

Spain: ‘ECI IDIOMAS BAILEN . . . are looking for a full time native teacher’

Russia: ‘Oxfordcrown (Moscow) is now recruiting native English-speaking teachers from English-speaking countries including the United Kingdom, the Republic of Ireland, the U.S.A., Australia, New Zealand and Canada . . .’

Korea: 'Must be native speaker and UK, Ire, USA, Can, NZ, Aus, SA citizen' (English Teacher Direct)'

Ecuador: 'Wall Street Institute Ambato is looking for Native Speakers (no experience needed)'

Singapore: 'Established private school urgently requires native speaking *Caucasian* English teachers for foreign students'

Oddly jobs in other sectors of employment now tend to avoid the native speaker term, instead relying on 'German speaker' or 'fluent in German'.

Why then are native speakers so desirable? One justification often put forward is that the students themselves demand native speakers. In a survey I conducted in several countries children in England indeed gave native speaker teachers a 72% preference, in Singapore 33%; adults in England preferred natives 82%, in Taiwan 51%. Outside England the preference for native speakers is not overwhelming.

Box 8.16 A Chinese Student's Views

If I were a beginning learner of L2, I would prefer a non-native speaker to be my teacher who shares the same L1 with me, which benefits me to learn the grammar and to understand some basic L2 expressions, parts of speech, collocations and so on. However, if I were an intermediate-level student or even an advanced learner, I would prefer to be taught by native speakers, for it is easier for them to recognize and correct some logical or further mistakes that I make in my oral expressions and writing. Anyway, no matter which kind of teacher that I would prefer to choose in different stages, the qualification and certificates that can prove their L2 teaching capabilities should be the first factor that I consider.

Box 8.17 shows some of the features that Hungarian students valued in native speaker and non-native speaker teachers, researched by Benke and Medgyes (2005). The non-native speaker teacher is seen as an efficient teacher, preparing you for exams, correcting your mistakes and knowing how good you are, but dependent on the coursebook. The native speaker teacher is perceived as concerned about spoken language, friendlier and providing more flexible and interactive classes.

The most obvious reason for preferring native speakers is the model of language that the native can present. Here is a person who has reached the apparent target that the students are striving after—what could be better? The native speaker can model the language the students are aiming at and can provide an instant authoritative answer to any language question. Their

prime advantage is indeed the obvious one that they speak the language as a first language. Ivor Timmis (2002) found that, given a choice between sounding like a native speaker or having the 'accent of my country', 67% of students preferred to speak like a native speaker.

Box 8.17 Top-Rated Features of Teachers by Hungarian Students (Benke and Medgyes, 2005)

The non-native speaker teacher:

- assigns lots of homework.
- prepares conscientiously.
- corrects errors consistently.
- prepares learners well for exams.
- assesses my language knowledge realistically.
- relies heavily on the coursebook.

The native speaker teacher:

- focuses primarily on speaking skills.
- is happy to improvise.
- provides extensive information about the culture.
- is interested in learners' opinions.
- applies group work regularly in class.

Do all native speakers present an equally desirable model? A native speaker of British is presumed to speak RP; yet this accent is used by a small minority of people in the United Kingdom, as we see in Chapter 4, let alone in the world at large. Is a Welsh accent equally acceptable? A London accent? Both are native accents but do not have the same status as RP outside their own localities. A Finnish professor I knew reckoned he was the only RP speaker in his university department despite all his colleagues being native speakers of English. A Middle East university who hired a native speaker teacher were disconcerted when a British speaker from Sunderland turned up. And yet he is as much a native speaker of English as I am, or as all the inhabitants of the UK are.

But, as we see throughout this book, gone are the days when the goal of learning a second language was just to sound like a native. Many students need to communicate with other non-native speakers, not with natives, sometimes in different ways from natives. Native speaker speech is only one of the possible models for the L2 student. Students who want to become successful L2 users may want to base themselves on the speech of successful L2 users, not on monolingual native speakers.

Box 8.18 Japanese English

'The mastery of a language has for its final object the expression of the exact light and shade of meaning conceived by the speaker . . . In short, the English of the Japanese must, in a certain sense, be Japanese' (Saito, 1928, p. 5).

Box 8.19 The Views of an Arabic Student

If I were a beginner (learner) in a language, I would like to be taught by a non-native teacher because he or she can give me equivalent words or expressions in my first language for the L2 ones, whereas a native speaker cannot do so since he or she does not know my L1, and a non-native teacher has already experienced the way of learning the L2 that I am trying to learn. Therefore, he knows better than a native speaker teacher what I am faced with while learning the L2.

Being a native speaker does not automatically make you a good teacher. In many instances the expat native speaker is less trained than the local non-native teacher or has been trained in an educational system with different values and goals; the local non-native speaker teacher knows the local circumstances and culture. Native speakers are not necessarily aware of the properties of their own language and are highly unlikely to be able to talk about its grammar coherently; one of the 16-year-olds in Benke and Medgyes (2005, p. 207) says 'They are sometimes not very accurate and they can't spell—especially Americans.' Given equal training and local knowledge, the native speaker's advantage is their proficiency at their native language, no more, no less.

Crucially the native speaker teacher does not belong to the group that the students are trying to join—L2 users. They have not gone through the same stages as their students and often do not know what it means to learn a second language themselves; their command of the students' own language often betrays their own failings as learners—I was told of a German class in London where much of the time was taken up by the students teaching English to the teacher—perhaps a not-uncommon example of reciprocal language teaching. A non-native teacher is necessarily a model of a person who commands two languages and is able to communicate through both; a native speaker teacher is unlikely to know two languages, even if there are exceptions.

Peter Medgyes (1992) highlights the drawbacks of native speakers, who:

- are not models of L2 users.
- cannot talk about L2 learning strategies from their own experience.
- are often not explicitly aware of the features of the language as much as non-native speakers.

- cannot anticipate learning problems.
- cannot empathise with their students' learning experience.
- are not able to exploit the learners' first language in the classroom.

In addition students may feel that native speaker teachers have achieved a perfection that is out of their reach; as Claire Kramsch (1998, p. 9) puts it, 'non-native teachers and students alike are intimidated by the native-speaker norm'. Students may prefer the more achievable model of the fallible non-native speaker teacher.

From my experience, native speakers were overwhelmingly preferred by language schools in London for teaching English, as the job ads imply. It may, however, no longer be legal in England to discriminate against non-native speakers. The Eurotunnel Consortium had to pay compensation to a French national married to an Englishman whose dismissal on grounds of not speaking English was ruled 'an act of unlawful discrimination on the grounds of her race'. The chairman of the employment tribunal said that the job description asking for a native English accent was comparable to having a 'whites-only policy'.

So non-native speaker teachers provide:

- *a model of a proficient L2 user in action.* The students witness someone who is using the second language effectively (one reason for using the L2 in the classroom); they can see that it is possible to operate in a language that is not one's own. The native speaker teacher on the other is a model of something alien which the students can never possibly be in the second language—a user of a first language.
- *a model of a person who has successfully learnt a second language.* The non-native teacher has acquired another language in the same way as the student, showing that it can be done. They have shared the student's own experience at some time in their lives. The native speaker teacher has followed a completely different route and has not had the students' experiences and problems at first hand.
- *more appropriate training and background.* The native speaker is an outsider and does not necessarily share the culture of the classroom and the values of the educational system in the same way. Often many expat EFL teachers are not fully trained, and indeed would not have the qualifications to teach in UK secondary schools.
- *possible lesser fluency etc in the second language.* Of course the preceding summary of non-native assets assumes that the non-native speaker teacher can speak fluently and communicate within the classroom, which may be far from true in many classrooms around the world. This is not due to their non-native status but to inadequate training or ineffective selection for their jobs; they are inefficient L2 users, not poor native speakers.

We can see then that the choice between native and non-native teachers is not a simple matter but confounds language knowledge, teacher training and

many other factors. Indeed if the sole asset of the native speaker is their command of the native language spoken in their home country, this has a short shelf-life; after six months or so, English teachers in Spain are starting to use English influenced by the Spanish teaching situation (Porte, 2003).

A compromise is to combine the good points of both native and non-native teachers. Most famously this is through the Assistant Language Teachers on the Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) Program in which native speaker teachers with comparatively little experience are teamed with experienced Japanese teachers in the classroom (<http://www.jet-uk.org/>). Typically the JET assistant is used both as a source of authentic native language and cultural information and as a foreigner to whom Japanese culture can be explained. The Japanese teacher takes responsibility for the overall direction and control of the class through their experience and local knowledge. More information can be found at the website for the MEXT, the Japanese Ministry of Education (www.mext.go.jp/english/).

Alternatively the presentation of native speaker speech can be through the materials and media. Tapes can use native speaker actors; television programmes, films or tapes can present authentic speech; and so on. The teacher does not have to be the sole source of input in the classroom. Indeed successful non-native teachers may produce students who speak the language better than they do in native speaker terms, provided that the sole model has not been the teacher's own speech. But of course the appropriate goal may not be native speaker language in the first place.

Box 8.20 Pros and Cons of Native and Non-Native Speaker Teachers

Expat native speaker teachers:

provide a model of native speaker use

may be fluent in their L1
know the L2 culture from the inside

may become less native over time

provide a model of someone who has learnt the L2 as an L1
may not have knowledge of the local educational system

may or may not have appropriate teacher training and qualifications

Non-native speaker teachers:

provide a model of L2 user use

may not be so fluent in their L2
know the L1 culture from the outside

may not change or may improve over time

provide a model of someone who has learnt the language as an L2
know the local educational system

have appropriate teacher training and qualifications

8.6. International Languages: English as a Lingua Franca (ELF)

Focusing Questions

- Why do people in your country or another country you know use a second language?
- Is English a peculiar language or is it typical of many other second languages?
- Do you think a language can escape the culture or control of its native speakers?

Keywords

hypercentral language: a language that is used globally for international purposes, as opposed to languages that are used more locally.

English as Lingua Franca (ELF, sometimes LFE): the name for the kind of English that is used globally by non-native speakers for many kinds of international purposes.

This section deals with the situation of languages that are used outside the country or area where they originated, concentrating on English as an international language, rather than say French or Chinese.

According to Abram de Swaan (2001), languages form a hierarchy, represented in the figure below:

- **peripheral** languages are used within a given territory by native speakers to each other, such as Welsh spoken in some regions of Wales or Japanese spoken in the whole of Japan.
- **central** languages are used within a single territory by people who are both native speakers and non-native speakers, for purposes of education and government, say English in India used by native speakers of many languages.
- **supercentral** languages are used across several parts of the world by natives and non-natives with specialised function, say Arabic or Latin for religious ceremonies. Often their spread reflects previous colonial empires, French, Spanish etc.
- **hypercentral** languages used chiefly by non-native speakers across the globe for a variety of purposes. At the moment only one hypercentral language exists, namely English.

To de Swaan (2001) languages exist in ‘constellations’. India for example has Hindi and English as two supercentral languages plus eighteen central languages, such as Gujarati and Sindhi, nearly all of which have official status within a state; the remaining 780 odd languages are peripheral.

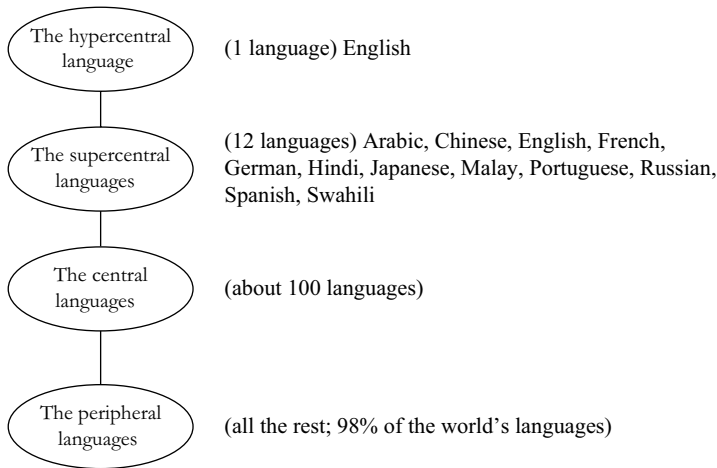


Figure 8.3 The hierarchy of languages (de Swaan, 2001).

Society as a whole depends on the interlocking of these languages and so is based on multilinguals who can plug the gaps between one level and another, whether within one territory or internationally. According to de Swaan (2001), the learning of second languages usually goes up the hierarchy rather than down: people learn a language that is the next level up. Speakers of a peripheral language have to learn a central language to function in their own society, say speakers of Catalan learning Spanish in Spain. Speakers of a central language need to learn a supercentral language to function within their region, say speakers of Persian learning Arabic. Speakers of a supercentral language need the hypercentral language to function globally; anybody other than a native speaker of English needs to learn English (and even they may need to learn ELF).

The main reason why people learn a local language (to adopt a slightly more neutral term than de Swaan's 'peripheral') like Finnish as a second language may be to meet Finnish people and take part in life in Finland; the emphasis is on native speakers in their native habitat. The reason for learning a central language is to interact with the rest of the population in multilingual societies: speakers of Ladin need Italian to go to Italian universities outside the South Tyrol. Some of the time users of central languages are dealing with native speakers, some of the time with fellow non-native users with different L1s, within the same country or geographical region. The reasons for acquiring supercentral languages depend on the uses of languages such as Hebrew for the Jewish faith and Arabic for Islam; the native speaker is of marginal relevance; the location may be anywhere where the language is used in this way, say synagogues or mosques across the globe. The reasons for acquiring the hypercentral language are the global demands of work; international business becomes difficult without English and the native speaker is only one of the types of people that need to be communicated with.

The reasons languages have got to these particular levels are complex and controversial. Some see the dark side of the dominance of English, regarding it as a way of retaining an empire through deliberate political actions (Phillipson, 1992) and inevitably leading to the death of local languages. Others see the use of English as an assertion of local rights to deal with the rest of the world in their own way rather than as domination (Canagarajah, 2005).

Some of these issues are considered in Chapter 9 in the context of the goals of language teaching. This section concentrates on English, which is unique in that it can be used for any of these levels from monolingual local to global hypercentral; the closest previous analogues were Latin and Chinese in the empires of Rome and China respectively. Some languages have become global in extremely limited uses, like Japanese for karate. Others have seen their vocabulary adapted to international use—try asking for the Starbucks coffee called ‘venti’ in a coffee bar in Italy—it simply means ‘twenty’ rather than ‘large’. But English has extended its scope way outside the previous boundaries of the British empire to a considerable range of functions.

Box 8.21 Features of ELF Grammar (Based on Seidlhofer, 2004)

- ‘dropping’ the third person ‘-s’
- confusing the relative pronouns ‘who’ and ‘which’
- omitting definite ‘the’ and indefinite ‘a/an’ articles where they are obligatory in native speech, and inserting them where they do not occur in native speech
- failing to use ‘correct’ forms in tag questions, say using ‘isn’t it?’ or ‘no?’ instead of ‘shouldn’t they?’
- inserting redundant prepositions, as in ‘We have to study about . . .’
- overusing certain verbs of high semantic generality, such as ‘do’, ‘have’, ‘make’, ‘put’, ‘take’
- replacing infinitive ‘to’ constructions with *that*-clauses, as in ‘I want that . . .’
- being over-explicit (e.g. ‘black colour’ rather than just ‘black’)

English may then be acquired for any or all of the above reasons. Other languages are limited to those appropriate to their position on the hierarchy. The demand for Finnish as an international language is probably small, though it may have some central role for the Finnish-speaking minority in Sweden. Various terms have been proposed for this peculiar status of English, whether International English, Global English or World English. Recent discussion has preferred the term English as Lingua Franca (ELF)—English as a means of communication between native speakers of other languages. In this context

'lingua franca' does not have its historic negative meaning of a mixed language but means a communication language used by speakers of other languages.

Throughout this chapter, the question that has been repeatedly posed is the status of the native speaker. At one time native speakers were unquestionably the only true speakers of the language; non-native speakers could only aspire to become like them. The grammars, dictionaries and pronunciation depended on one form or another of native English. Social interaction was assumed to take place between native speakers and non-native speakers.

Nowadays much use of English takes place between fellow non-native speakers; 74% of English in tourism does not involve a native speaker (Graddol, 2006). Many jobs—professional footballers, merchant seamen, call centre workers or airplane pilots—require L2 user to L2 user interaction. Sometimes indeed the native speaker may find it difficult to join in. L2 users of ELF need primarily to be able to talk to each other rather than to native speakers.

Yet the Chinese person talking to the Brazilian in English or the German speaker talking to the Arabic speaker in English do need to share some common form of English or they won't understand each other. While most arguments for the native speaker version of the language are based on ownership and linguistic power, native speaker language at least provides a common standard of reference so that the Chinese person and the Brazilian are sharing the same English. Native speaker English has been extensively studied and described for a hundred years so a great amount is known about it; we know the sort of grammatical patterns and vocabulary that native speakers use.

But suppose that the English used by non-natives is the target. Compared to the wealth of information on native language, comparatively little is known about non-native English by L2 users; mostly it has been investigated in terms of deviations from native speech rather than in its own right. Chapter 4 discusses Jenny Jenkins' (2002) proposals for an ELF pronunciation syllabus based on students' difficulties with each others' speech, for instance not bothering with teaching /ð~θ/ but paying particular attention to where the sentence stress occurs. While this severs the link to the native speaker, the phonology is based on students learning language in classrooms rather than on L2 users using language in the world outside education; what students accept or reject may not be the same as what experienced L2 users might feel.

Currently considerable research is taking place into the characteristics of ELF, for example in the VOICE research at the University of Vienna, based on a variety of L2 users. From this comes the list in Box 8.21, compiled by Barbara Seidlhofer (2004). Characteristics of ELF are different usage of articles from native English, invariable forms of tag questions such as 'isn't it?' and 'are you?', and so on. Many of these have been regarded as persistent mistakes by teachers; how often have I added or deleted 'the' and 'a' from students' work? If, however, this variation simply reflects characteristics of the variety of English that the students are modelling and does not hinder their communication, there is no need to try to change it towards the native form; my urge to correct it is based on my own native speaker usage, not on the ELF variety suitable for

the students. If the argument is that these forms are non-native, it is always possible to retort 'Which native?'. The invariable tag 'innit?', the omission of third person '-s' and the common spoken 'over-use' of 'do' or 'got' are all found in colloquial British English, only not from the type of native speaker that has been considered appropriate for students.

If L2 users can understand each other despite these differences from native speaker English, there is little point in making them conform to native speech for its own sake. It has often been reported to me that the problem at international meetings where English is used is not so much the L2 users understanding each other as the L2 users understanding the native speakers, who make no concessions to the ELF that is being used. Indeed it has sometimes been suggested that native speakers themselves should be taught these ELF forms.

Box 8.22 ELF (English as Lingua Franca)

The status of English is now peculiar in that it has become a lingua franca and a hypercentral language largely spoken between non-native speakers.

A main motive for many learners is then to be able to speak with fellow L2 users, not native speakers.

The target in grammatical and phonological terms for them will need to be based on successful ELF English, not native speaker English or student English.

Discussion Topics

- 1 Devise a classroom communicative activity depending on use of both languages (other than translation).
- 2 What do you now believe about the status of the native speaker in language teaching?
- 3 How would you define a successful L2 learner?
- 4 When should codeswitching *not* occur in the classroom?
- 5 How much L1 is the maximum for the L2 classroom? 0%? 10%? 20%? 50%? More?
- 6 Will the public's demand for native speakers to teach them the second language ever change?

Further Reading

The key texts in this area are: Myers-Scotton (2005), in the *Handbook of Bilingualism*; Macaro (1997), *Target Language, Collaborative Learning and Autonomy*; de Swaan (2001), *Words of the World: The Global Language System*; Llurda (ed.) (2005), *Non-Native Teachers*; and Seidlhofer (2013) *Understanding English as a Lingua Franca*.

9 The Goals of Language Teaching

This chapter looks at language as the possession of a group of people and on the L2 user as a member of a specific group. It describes some of the roles that second languages play in people's lives and sees how these can be translated into goals of language teaching. It raises the fundamental questions of why we are teaching a second language and of what students want to be and what groups they want to belong to, things which teachers often neglect to think about in their busy teaching lives.

Box 9.1 Language Teachers' Goals for Language Teaching

Japan: Teachers in Japan target the language learning goal for their future both seeking for jobs in the country and working abroad. However, most students take it for passing the entrance exams.

Saudi Arabia: Saudi teachers try to make learners able to achieve the goals of each individual course in order for learners to be able to pass their courses, with an increasing emerging focus on the communicative aspect of teaching, which concerns learners' future for getting jobs or using it overseas.

Poland: To allow students to communicate freely in most situations (including those of a professional nature). To be successful in national exams.

China: Jobs and examinations, but nowadays, going abroad to study is a hot objective.

To some people acquiring a second language is a difficult feat; to others it is ordinary and unexceptional. Take the real-life history of a boy in Tanzania who spoke Kihaya at home; he needed Kiswahili in elementary school and English in secondary school; he trained to be a priest, for which he needed Latin, but he also learnt French out of curiosity at the same time. Then he went as a priest to Uganda and Kenya, where he needed Rukiga and Kikamba, and he is now in Illinois where he needs Spanish to communicate with his

parishioners. To most monolingual English speakers, this seems a mindboggling life-story. It is extraordinary to us that someone can use more than one language in their everyday life.

A country like the Cameroon has two national languages and 280 living languages; most people use four or five languages in the course of a day. Probably more people in the world are like the typical Cameroonian than the typical English person. According to Ethnologue (Lewis, Simons and Fennig, 2013), there are now 7105 languages in the world but there are only 193 countries that are members of the United Nations. (The figures for languages used here are mostly taken from Ethnologue (Lewis, Simons and Fennig, 2013), an amazing source of information available online.) Even in Europe 54% of the citizens of the EU can hold a conversation in another language (EuroBarometer, 2012). Knowing a second language is a normal part of human existence; it may well be unusual to know only one.

A starting point is to look at what a language is. Conventionally one meaning of 'language' is political in the Lang₂ sense of Chapter 1 'an abstract entity': a language belongs to a nation, whether German, French, English or Chinese. An aphorism attributed to Uriel Weinreich says that a language is a dialect with an army and a navy. This definition in terms of a nation works when the everyday use of a language effectively stops at the borders of a country, say Japanese in Japan. In these cases the native speakers of the language are born and live within the country. These are local languages spoken within the same area whether a country or a section of a country. They usually have a single standard form based on a particular region or social class regardless of dialects: standard Japanese derives from Tokyo, standard Korean from Seoul. For those local languages the logical target of teaching may indeed be the language and culture of the native speaker.

Languages, however, may have native speakers spread across neighbouring countries, not just confined to a single country—supercentral languages in de Swaan's terms, like Swahili, Arabic and Chinese. Some languages do not even have nation homes in that they spread across several countries without being recognised in any of them, say Romany in many countries of Europe or Kurdish spread across several frontiers. Other languages spoken within the boundaries of one country may not be the official language of the state, say Basque and Catalan in Spain or Scottish Gaelic in Scotland. Often this may indeed be a major plank in arguments for political independence, for instance Catalonia in Spain. Languages may then have very different statuses.

9.1. The Different Roles of Second Languages in People's Lives

Focusing Questions

- In the area where you live, how many languages are spoken? Officially or actually?
- How many languages do you know? How many do you use in a day?
- Would you, as a parent, bring up children to speak two languages or not? Why?

Keywords

élite bilingualism: either the decision by parents to bring up children through two languages, or societies in which members of a ruling group speak a second language.

official language: language(s) recognised by a country for official purposes.

multilingualism: countries or situations where more than one language is used for everyday purposes.

linguistic imperialism: the means by which a 'centre' country dominates 'periphery' countries by making them use its language.

polylingualism as used in the CEFR (2008) refers to a person using another language in a country not their own.

This section needs to start by defusing the myth that bilingualism in itself has a bad effect on children, typified by Thompson (1952): 'There can be no doubt that the child reared in a bilingual environment is handicapped in his language growth.' This view is still around; the advice in a pamphlet for parents of Down syndrome children *I Can Talk* (Streets, 1976, reprinted 1991) is: 'Bilingual families: for any child this is confusing—one language should be the main one to avoid confusion.'

However, since the 1960s, research has pointed unequivocally to the advantages of bilingualism: children who know a second language are better at separating semantic from phonetic aspects of words, at classifying objects, and at coming up with creative ideas. They also have sharper awareness of language, as we see below; a brief list of bilingual writers such as Vladimir Nabakov, André Brink and Joseph Conrad soon confirms this. As for confusion, Einstein used more than one language (and was also a late speaker as a child). According to Ellen Bialystok and others (2007), the onset of Alzheimer's disease in old age can be staved off in bilinguals. Much of the earlier belief in the deficiencies of the bilingual turned out to be a flaw in the research design of not separating bilingualism out from the poverty and isolation of immigrant groups.

Bilingualism by Choice

Some people speak two languages because their parents decided to bring them up bilingually in the home. This so-called 'élite' bilingualism is not forced on the parents by society or by the educational system but is their free choice. Often one of the languages involved is the central language of the country, the other a local language spoken by one parent as a native. Sometimes both parents speak a minority local language themselves but feel the majority central language should also be used at home. However, George Saunders (1982)

describes how he and his wife decided to bring up their children in German in Australia though neither of them was a native speaker. Others have three languages in the family; Philip Riley's children spoke English and Swedish at home and French at school (Harding and Riley, 1986).

This parental choice also extends in some countries to educating their children through a second language, for example, in International Schools across the world, in the 'European Schools' movement (Baetens Beardsmore, 1993), the French Lycée in London or indeed in the English 'public' schools that now educate large numbers of children from non-English speaking countries (for the non-Brit: a public school in the UK is an expensive private school, not part of the state system). Choosing this type of bilingual education usually depends upon having money or upon being an expatriate; it is mostly a preserve of the middle classes. While a second language is often considered a 'problem' in the education of lower-status people, it is seen as a mark of distinction in those of higher status. A Chinese child in a state school in England is seen as having a language problem, not helped by being 'mainstreamed' with all the other children; a Chinese child in a public school has been recruited by the school from say Hong Kong, and their bilingualism is seen as an asset, to be helped with special English classes.

So bilingualism by choice mostly takes place outside the main educational contexts of L2 teaching, and varies according to the parents' wishes; accounts of these will be found in the self-help manuals written for parents by Arnberg (1987) and by Edith Harding and Philip Riley (1986).

Second Languages for Religious Use

Some people use a second language because of their religion. For centuries after its decline as an international language, Latin functioned as a religious language of the Catholic Church. Muslims read the Koran in Arabic, regardless of whether they live in an Arabic-speaking country like Saudi Arabia or in a multilingual country like Malaysia. Jews outside Israel continue to learn Hebrew so that they can pray in it and study the Bible and other sacred texts. In parts of India, Christianity is identified with English, in Ethiopia with Amharic. Though the language of religious observances is specialised, it is nonetheless a form of L2 use for supercentral languages. As this type of L2 learning is distinct from most classroom situations, it will not be discussed further here but it should not be overlooked as it is for millions of people the most profound use of a second language imaginable.

Official Languages and L2 Learning

According to Laponce (1987, p. 32) countries recognise more than one language for official purposes. Switzerland has four languages (German, French, Italian, Romansh), and uses Latin on its stamps ('Helvetia'). The Singapore

government uses English, Mandarin, Malay and Tamil and counts English as the first language.

But the fact that a country has several official languages does not mean that any individual person speaks more than one; the communities may be entirely separate. Mackey (1967) claims that 'there are fewer bilingual people in the bilingual countries than there are in the so-called unilingual countries'. Few Canadians for instance use both English and French in daily life. Instead, the French and English speakers live predominantly in different parts of Canada, as do the German, French and Italian speakers in Switzerland, and the French and Flemish speakers in Belgium. It is necessary in many of these countries to teach speakers of one official language to use another official language; Afrikaans-speaking civil servants in South Africa need English; their English-speaking counterparts in Canada need French.

This does not necessarily mean that each official language is equally favoured; few Swiss would bother to learn Romansh as a second language. Nor does it mean that the official language learnt is the version actually used in the country; in Switzerland, French-speaking children learn High German, not the Swiss German mostly spoken in the German-speaking areas, so that they can in a sense speak with Germans better than they can with their compatriots.

Sometimes a language can become an official language with at first few, if any, native speakers. Hebrew was revived by a popular movement in Israel long before being adopted by the new state. The teaching of Hebrew in Israel did not just educate one group in the language of another but created a group of people who spoke a second language that would become the first language of their children. In some countries an official language is selected that has, at least to start with, a small proportion of native speakers, for example Swahili in Tanzania, where only 10% of the population are native speakers. Another pattern is found in the Congo, where French is the official language but there are four 'national languages', Kiswahili, Ciluba, Lingala, and Kikongo, which are used as lingua francas among speakers of different mother tongues. To take a final example, in Pakistan four languages are spoken in different provinces: Pashto, Punjabi, Balochi and Sindi. Urdu is used all over the country, as is Arabic for religious purposes. In addition English is an official language.

Multilingualism and L2 Learning

Regardless of whether they have more than one official language, most countries contain large numbers of people who use other languages. According to the Eurydice network (Eurydice, 2012) in Europe, '8% of pupils aged 15 say that at home they speak a language other than the language of instruction.' While England uses one language for official purposes, a survey of London found that 32% of children spoke languages other than English at home and that 300 different languages were spoken (Baker and Eversley, 2000). Some countries nevertheless consist almost entirely of speakers of a single language:

121 million of the 128 million inhabitants of Japan speak Japanese (Lewis, Simons and Fennig, 2013).

Others conceal a variety of languages under one official language. Of the 61 million people in France, 1.5 million speak Alsatian, 250 thousand Breton, 76 thousand Basque, Catalan 100 thousand and so on (Lewis, Simons and Fennig, 2013), all local languages. In Vancouver where 46% of the population are immigrants, undoubtedly more bilinguals speak Chinese alongside English than French, and in Toronto only 4.9% of the inhabitants speak French at home (Gardner, 2007), despite English and French being the official languages of Canada. In the year 2011, 60.6 million U.S. residents over five years old spoke a language other than English at home, i.e. more than one in five of the population (US Census Bureau, 2013); this trend has led to a worry about the continuing status and importance of English.

Mobility also plays a part in multilingualism. Some countries, for one reason or other, include static populations of speakers of different languages, sometimes called 'internal colonies'. The UK has had speakers of Welsh, Gaelic and English for many centuries, indeed since long before the UK actually existed. Ethnologue (Lewis, Simons and Fennig, 2013) counts 28 living languages as spoken in South Africa, 447 in India and 109 in Vietnam. In many cases this multiplicity of languages reflects the arbitrary borders imposed on various countries in modern times. Much was the historical result of conquest or movement of people; the empires of Islam and France led to Algeria having speakers of French, Arabic and Berber; the legacy of the British Empire and trade led to Malaysia having speakers of Bahasa Malaysia, Chinese, Indian languages and various indigenous languages, amounting to 140 in total. Recent changes in such groups have sometimes consisted of people going back to their homeland—ethnic Germans returning to Germany, Turkish-speaking Bulgarians returning to Turkey, and so on. A balance between the languages in one country has often been arrived at, though not necessarily with the consent or approval of the speakers of the minority languages: children were at one time or another forbidden to speak Basque in Spain, Navajo in the USA or Kurdish in Turkey; Koreans in Japanese-occupied territories had to adopt Japanese names; the Turkish minority in Bulgaria had to use Bulgarian names. Indeed deaf children in England, a form of multilingualism that is often forgotten, have often been made to sit on their hands in class to prevent them using sign language.

The past few decades seem to have accelerated movements of people from one country to another, as refugees, such as the Vietnamese, as immigrants, such as Algerians in France, or as migrants looking for work, such as Syrians in Germany or Poles in England and Ireland. This has created a vast new multilingualism. New York is said to be the biggest Gujarati-speaking city outside the Indian subcontinent, Melbourne the largest Maltese-speaking city in the world. An Indian student born in Uganda said to me that the first Indian city she had lived in was the London suburb of Southall. A wealth of languages are spoken in every European town today regardless of the official language of

the country; Turkish is spoken in London or in Berlin or in Amsterdam; Arabic can be heard from Paris to Brussels to Berlin; in the west London suburb of Ealing 20% of children speak Panjabi, 10% Hindi/Urdu, and 6% Gujarati (Baker and Eversley, 2000). In some cases these people are temporary birds of passage intending to return to their country once the political or economic situation changes—Polish taxi-drivers in most English cities, say. In most cases they are permanent citizens of the country with the same rights as any other citizen, like Finnish-speaking citizens of Sweden or Bengali-speaking citizens of England.

In many cases such multilingualism is bound to be short-lived. Paulston (1986) describes how immigrants to the United States from Greece and Italy become native speakers of English over three or four generations. In her view such a shift from minority to majority language is prevented only when there are strong boundaries around the group, whether social or geographical (Gaelic in the Hebrides) or self-imposed (the Amish in the USA, who speak Pennsylvania Deutsch), or when there is a clear separation in social use of the two languages ('diglossia'), as in Standard Arabic versus local versions of Arabic in North Africa. Having one's own ethnic culture as a minority group means speaking the language of that culture, usually different from the majority language, but not necessarily so—as in the use of English by many Scottish nationalists. Language is then often part of ethnicity, and hence associated with political movements for the rights of particular groups. Indeed this extends to the rise of heritage languages in some minority groups, which may not currently be spoken by any of the members; the Confucius Institutes that are springing up around the world for the teaching of Chinese have found that one important group of students consists of Chinese speakers of other dialects wishing to learn Mandarin.

Joshua Fishman (1991) has described this intergenerational shift as a Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale, abbreviated to GIDS, which has eight stages. At the first stage a language is used for some 'higher level' government and mass media say but does not have 'political independence'; an example might be Swiss German. At the second stage the language is used in the 'lower' levels of government and media but not 'in the higher spheres of either'. And so on till stage 7 when the users of the language are old and 'beyond child-bearing age' but still talk to each other, like some speakers of old Italian dialects in Toronto. And it concludes with stage 8 when the only language users left are socially isolated and need to transmit their language to people who can teach it to a new generation, like speakers of some aboriginal languages in Australia or speakers of Cornish in Cornwall.

Internationalism and Second Languages

For many students the second language has no real role within their own society; English is not learnt in China because of its usefulness inside China. Instead the second language is taught in the educational system because of the

benefits it brings in from outside the home country. A language may then be taught with the aim of promoting relationships with other countries that use it. In the Council of Europe jargon this is polylingualism where people communicate across a divide rather than multilingualism in which people become part of a new wider community.

So a particular country, or indeed a particular individual, may decide to learn a second language for a purpose outside their own society, whether to do business with other countries, to gain access to a scientific literature or to a cultural heritage, or to be able to work in other countries. In Israel 'Speakers of Hebrew or Arabic will need to be able to use both spoken and written English in order to progress in their professional, business or academic careers, as well as in order to travel, enjoy international entertainment, or take advantage of the opportunities offered by the Internet' (*English Curriculum, Revised*, 2013, p. 5).

Such use of an international language does not necessarily entail any acceptance of the values of the society from which it originates. Steve Biko justified English as the language of the Black People's Convention in South Africa because it acted as a lingua franca and it was 'analytical' (Biko, 1978). Anti-British graffiti in Belfast were written in English, not Irish. The speaker's attitudes to the target culture are marginal to such uses.

Sometimes as a hangover from colonialism the original speakers of an international language feel that they have the right to say what it should be or how it should be taught. We can complement the advertisements for native speaker English teachers in Chapter 8 with the examples of the Alliance Française in London claiming French 'taught by French nationals', the Eurolingua Institute 'lessons are given by experienced and fully qualified mother tongue teachers' and Language Trainers 'All our German teachers are native speakers (from Germany, Austria or Switzerland)'.

Setting aside political or commercial motivations, the responsibility for international languages has passed out of the hands of the original owners. Furthermore, the right to say how something should be *taught* is even less a right of the native speaker than the right to say how something should be *said*. An Englishman or an American has no more intrinsic right to tell an Egyptian how to teach English than does a Japanese person; the only one who can decide what is right for Egypt is the Egyptian. As a spokesman said in China, 'For China we need a Chinese method.' Whether an idea or an approach to language teaching is useful does not depend on which country it comes from. Its merits have to be accepted or rejected by the experts on the situation—the teachers and students who live and work there.

As we have seen in this section, language is not politically neutral. Deciding which language should be used in a particular country or which other language should be taught affects the economic and cultural life not only of the country itself but also of the country from which the language comes. Take the example of English. On the one hand Singapore's decision to make English its 'first' language must have played a significant part in its economic success. On the other hand the UK itself can try to keep economic links with many

parts of the world by promoting English. This is without taking into account the vast sums of money involved in the language teaching operation itself, whether in the sales of British books or the students coming to UK schools and universities. On the negative side some politicians have bemoaned the fact that one of the attractions of the UK to migrants is that most of them have been taught English at school.

Robert Phillipson (1992) calls this 'linguistic imperialism' and sees it as a special case of Galtung's (1980) concept of 'a dominant Centre (the powerful western countries) and a dominated Periphery (the under-developed countries)'. The Centre can exert this domination in part by forcing the Periphery to use its languages. So English as a Centre language is used for business purposes of trading between Periphery countries and the Centre. However, this use has been so successful that English escaped the hands of its originators and allowed Periphery countries to do business with each other rather than with the UK itself.

In addition, educational systems in the Periphery emphasise English and indeed have instruction through English, particularly at university; the Islamic University of Gaza, for example, uses English as the means of instruction for all subjects, as do universities in Egypt, the Netherlands and Botswana. Above all English is a requirement for scientific writing and reading: few scientists can make a proper contribution to their field without having access to English, either in person or through translation of one kind or another. While the teaching of scientific English may be of vital importance to the individual learner, the pressure to use English for science is a form of linguistic imperialism. Publication in scientific journals depends on getting over an additional obstacle that native speakers do not have to face; journals that originate from the Centre are not going to value independent views from people outside this area. Even in the SLA research area, this is apparent; it is dominated by literature in English and biased towards accounts of acquisition of English in highly developed countries. An international conference on cross-cultural psychology only used English, despite the fact that many participants did not speak it well. Academics who live in Centre countries naturally feel they cannot compromise academic standards—but it is the standards of the Centre that are continually perpetuated, not the potentially infinite richness of scientific exploration possible through different cultures and approaches.

Indeed the influence of the Centre is not just on the choice of language that other countries need to learn but on the very means of teaching them. The French audiovisual method of language teaching described in Chapter 11 was exported to Francophone Africa; British communicative teaching spread to most parts of the globe. Adrian Holliday (1994) points to the permanent guilt feelings of the local teacher who is never able to apply the Centre-approved methods to their own satisfaction, basically because they were not designed specifically for the needs of any local situation.

Recently, however, the concept of linguistic imperialism has been criticised on many grounds (Canagarajah, 2005). One is that in many cases English is

not so much imposed from outside as requested by the locals themselves as a way of communicating with the world at large, not just with the centre of an empire—a network with many connections rather than a spider's web leading only to the centre. The other reason is that fears of English replacing other languages seem to have been exaggerated; for instance in India the shift is, not towards English, but towards local regional languages (Bhatt, 2005). Of course this may reflect the unique situation of English as the hypercentral language, as seen in Chapter 8, not necessarily true of supercentral and central languages.

A crucial decision for language teaching is which language to teach. Historically the choice in England has been French, presumably mostly for political and historical reasons—if you want to gain access to Oxford or Cambridge universities it is still said to be an advantage to have a name that suggests aristocratic French origins such as Gascoyne and Montagu rather than plebeian Anglo Saxon ones such as Sweet or Clarke. As we see in Chapter 8, the languages that are taught in school tend to be higher on the De Swaan hierarchy than the student's native language.

Approached from another angle, which languages are thought to be useful for students to learn for their future careers? Figure 9.1 shows how UK business managers rated the usefulness of languages in 2012, with German and French at the top (CBI, 2012) and three Asian, three other European languages and Arabic in the top 10. The figures for UK trade in 2011 show that the UK does most export business, in descending order excluding English-speaking countries, with Germany, France, the Netherlands, Belgium, Italy, China, Sweden, India, Switzerland and Hong Kong (Office for National Statistics, 2012). German and French are indeed important but perhaps Dutch and Italian would also come in handy; Japan only comes seventeenth on the list, Poland eighteenth.

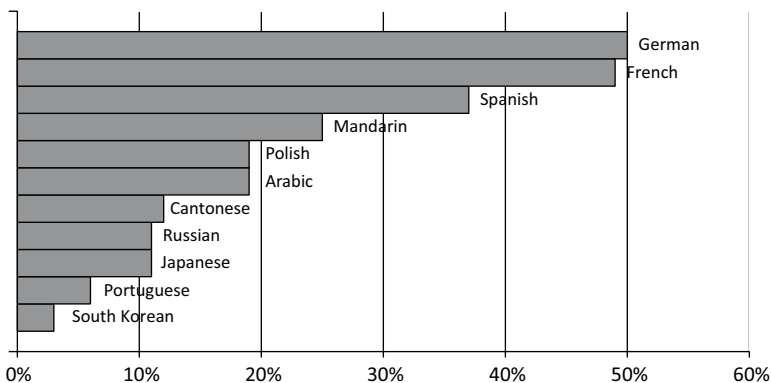


Figure 9.1 Useful languages according to CBI survey of UK firms, 2012.

9.2. Languages and Groups of Speakers

Focusing Questions

- Does your community use a single language or more than one? Which is preferable?
- Of all the groups to which you belong—family, religion, nation etc—how important is the group of L1 speakers? Of L2 users?
- What modern jobs necessarily require the use of a second language?

Let us now turn to the groups of L2 users that people may belong to, i.e. membership of a community in the Lang_4 sense of ‘language’. While language is often seen as a shared core value of the community (Smolicz and Secombe, 2003), it is not always a necessary requirement; Jewish communities for instance have historically spoken diverse languages across the world such as Yiddish (Myhill, 2003). Nor are the members of the community necessarily fluent in its language, as with Scottish Gaelic (Dorian, 1981). People may be part of a community without speaking its language—how many Irish Americans speak Irish?

As well as monolingual communities, there are many communities where it is necessary to use more than one language. India for example has a ‘Three Language Formula’ 3 ± 1 : everyone has to know, not only Hindi and English, but also the local language of a particular state. If the local state language is Hindi or English, they only need two languages ($3-1$); if neither Hindi or English is the state language and they speak another language, they need four languages ($3+1$) (Laitin, 2000). It is taken for granted that the community itself is multilingual, the languages involved varying by individual and by state. The ongoing discussion of ELF recognises at least one widespread L2 user community, crossing national boundaries and becoming detached from the native speaker, as Latin once separated from Italy.

Groups of Language Users

Both SLA research and language teaching need to be clear about the differences between language user groups rather than treating all users and learners as the same. The box lists some of these groups. Illustrations come primarily from London.

Box 9.2 Language User Groups

- A people speaking their native language
- B people using an L2 within the majority community
- C people historically from a particular community (re)-acquiring its language as L2

- D people speaking an L2 as short-term visitors to another country or to short-term visitors to their country
- E people using an L2 with spouses or friends
- F people using an L2 internationally for specific functions
- G students and teachers acquiring or conveying an education through an L2
- H pupils and teachers learning or teaching L2 in school

People Speaking Their Native Language

Some people use their native language exclusively. So monolingual Londoners speak English with each other and potentially with anybody else who speaks English in the world; in London they make up the sea, so to speak. But native speakers may also be an island in a sea; deaf people in England use British Sign Language in the midst of the hearing. And of course many native speakers of one language are L2 users of another language rather than monolinguals.

People Speaking a Second Language within a Majority Community

Some residents use a second language to communicate with the majority language group, say resident Bengalis in Tower Hamlets using English as a central language for their everyday contacts with other citizens of London. Often this group is permanent and may predate the existence of the majority community, such as Aboriginals in Australia. They are using the second language for practical purposes—the classic ‘second language’ situation—while having a first language for other social and cultural purposes. In addition many people living in multilingual communities use the second language as a central language with speakers of minority language groups other than their own, essentially as a local lingua franca. The Bengali L1 shop owner in Tower Hamlets uses English for speaking with Arabic L1 customers, both equally English in nationality, true of most of the L1 speakers of the 300 languages of London (Baker and Eversley, 2000). Sometimes the L2 lingua franca crosses national borders. Swahili has 770 thousand native speakers but 30 million lingua franca speakers spread across several African countries (Lewis, Simons and Fennig, 2013).

People Historically from a Particular Community (Re)-Acquiring Its Language as L2

The descendants of a particular cultural or ethnic group may want to learn its language, for instance to talk to their grandparents who were first generation incomers. Language maintenance classes take place in London ranging from Polish to Greek. Some people are trying to find their roots through language. Other are returning to their country of historical origin and need to re-acquire

the language, or sometimes to acquire it for the first time. One example is Puerto Ricans returning from the US to Puerto Rico (Clachar, 1997), rejoining a community of L1 speakers as L2 users. Another group are children of expats going back to the country their family originally came from, say Japanese children returning to Japan (Kanno, 2000); these need to acquire the language of the homeland for practical purposes as well as cultural identity, many finding it an extremely difficult task.

*People Speaking an L2 Either as Short-Term Visitors to Another Country
or to Short-Term Visitors to Their Country*

Some people are short-term visitors to another country, say tourists. English for tourism is no longer a matter of English-speaking tourists going to non-English speaking countries or non-English speaking tourists going to English-speaking countries, as we have seen. Some tourists may nevertheless try to learn the language of a country before visiting it—English people learning French to go to France, Japanese people learning Spanish to visit Spain. English for tourism is a theme in most EFL coursebooks, Spanish for tourism a key attraction for evening classes in England. Other short-term visitors to another country include: athletes going to the Olympic Games, businessmen attending conferences, policemen investigating crimes, pilgrims, retirees visiting their villas in Spain, the list is endless. Again some may want to use the central language of the country, some a language that will get them by, such as Latin or Klingon at conferences of their devotees. The reverse is people using an L2 with visitors to their country, whether the visitor's L1 as with Japanese people in Tokyo using English with English-speaking L1 visitors or the visitor's L2 as with Japanese using English with L1 German-speaking visitors.

People Using an L2 with Spouses, Siblings or Friends

L2 users may, however, speak their second language within a small social group. People have often joked that the best way of learning a language is to marry someone who speaks it; such married bilingual couples feel they are quite capable of passing for native speakers (Piller, 2002). Parents can choose to use a language with their children that they will not encounter outside the home. Indeed unrelated pairs of people can decide to use a second language: Henry VIII wrote love letters to Ann Boleyn and Katherine of Aragon in French (Vatican City, 2008), the language of courtly love.

People Using an L2 Internationally for Specific Functions

English Lingua Franca (ELF) too belongs to a variety of groups of speakers. One is made up of academics, using the language for academic journals and conferences everywhere. Other groups use specially designed varieties

of English like *ASD Simplified Technical English*, a carefully restricted English for technical writing (ASD, 2007). And of course international business uses English regardless of L1, say Danish businessmen talking to Indians or Syrians on the phone (Firth, 1996). People who speak ELF belong to communities that cross frontiers, united by a common interest. In one view, English no longer counts as learning another language; it's an addition to the three Rs (reading, writing and arithmetic) necessary for primary school children everywhere (Graddol, 2006). But supercentral languages also have specialised transnational uses, for instance Japanese in martial arts or Arabic for Muslims.

Students and Teachers Acquiring or Conveying an Education through an L2

Another group of L2 users is gaining an education through a second language, as we saw earlier. On the one hand they may be another L2 minority island in an L1 sea; in the Netherlands, universities use English alongside Dutch. In reverse, students go to another country to get their higher education, Zaireans to Paris, Greeks to England. In other words a second language is the vehicle for education, more or less regardless of its native speakers (except in so far as they can profit by teaching 'their' language). Within this general framework comes the elite bilingualism of children educated in multilingual schools.

Pupils and Teachers Learning or Teaching L2 in School

Finally children are taught a second language as part of the school curriculum—the classic 'foreign' language situation whether French in England or Spanish in Japan. The children do not themselves form a community of users, perhaps the only group we can really call 'learners' rather than users. Often the goal is to get through the hurdles set by the examination system—language as a school subject, taught and assessed like other subjects. This group are unique in not having an L2 identity of their own; their use is not an end in itself so much as the route to getting somewhere else.

Doubtless many other groups could be added, for example interpreters—whether professionals or children helping their parents, a widespread use in minority groups. Some use the second language to native speakers, some to other non-native speakers. The goal of becoming a native speaker or even understanding a native speaker is beside the point; the aim is to become an efficient L2 user. Separating community from the monolingual native speaker leads to new groupings of speakers. Moreover an individual may have multiple memberships in these groups: a professional footballer coming to London needs not just the visitor language to cope with living there but also the specialised ELF of football for interacting with the rest of the team (Kellerman, Koonen and van der Haagen, 2005)—60% of league footballers in England currently are non-native speakers of English.

Box 9.3 Language and Groups

Language users are members of many possible groups ranging from the family up to the nation.

Many groups are genuinely multilingual rather than monolingual.

It is crucial to see L2 users as belonging to many groups and as being part of a new group of L2 users rather than as supplicants to join native speaker groups.

Teachers should be clear in their minds that they are usually teaching people how to use two languages, *not* how to use one in isolation. The person who can speak two languages has the ability to communicate in two ways. The aim is not to produce L2 speakers who can only use the language when speaking to members of their own group. Myhill (1990), for instance, points out that English materials for Aborigines in Australia, such as *Tracks* (Northern Territory, 1979), reflect their own lifestyle rather than that of the English-speaking community: what's the point in them speaking to each other in English? Nor should the aim be to produce imitation native speakers, except perhaps for trainee spies. Rather the goal should be people who can stand between two viewpoints and between two cultures, a multi-competent speaker who can do more than any monolingual. Much language teaching has unsuccessfully tried to duplicate the skills of the native speaker in the non-native speaker, as we argue in Chapter 8; the functions of language or the rules of grammar known by the native speaker are taught to the students. The point should instead be to equip people to use two languages without losing their own identity. The model for language teaching should be the fluent L2 user—'Japanese with English Abilities'—not the native speaker. This is called by Michael Byram (1990) 'intercultural communicative competence'. It enables language teaching to have goals that students can see as relevant and achievable rather than the distant vision of unattainable native speaker competence. One of the significant steps in this direction is the use by the Common European Framework (2008) of 'can-do' statements (what I can do) rather than measures of 'can't-do' based on native speakers.

9.3. The Goals of Language Teaching**Focusing Questions**

- Do you think people who come to live in another country should learn the majority language and forget their own, adopt the majority language for some everyday purposes, or try to keep both the majority language and their L1 going?
- What goals do you or your students have for their second language outside their own country? Careers? Education? Access to information? Travel? Other goals?

Keywords

language maintenance and **bilingual language teaching**: teaching to maintain or extend the minority local language within its own group.

submersion teaching: sink-or-swim form of teaching in which minority language children are put in majority language classes.

What does this diversity of functions and group memberships mean for L2 learning and teaching? We can make a broad division between *central goals* which foster the second language within the country, *international goals* which foster it for use outside the country and *individual goals* which aim at developing the potential of the individual learner.

Central Goals of Teaching

The central goals of language teaching are those that serve the needs of the society within itself, particularly the need for different groups to interact with each other. The educational system is one aspect of this. In some countries education takes place almost exclusively through the central official language: English in England, French in France. Hence those who do not speak the language of the school need help in acquiring it. In other countries special classes enable children to acquire the majority language for the classroom. The Bilingual Education Act in the United States, for example, required the child to have English teaching as an aid in the transition to the ordinary classroom. François Grosjean (1982) says of such classes, 'For a few years at least the children can be in a transitory haven before being "swallowed up" by the regular system'. Indeed this mainstreaming of the immigrant child with some language support is now widespread across Europe, for example in Denmark, Ireland, Italy, Cyprus, Austria, Portugal and Poland (Eurydice, 2012).

Employment is another aspect. Schemes are set up to help the worker who does not know the language of the workplace; new adult immigrants to Sweden, for example, must be offered the opportunity to study Swedish by their local municipality within three months. Sometimes the needs of the new adult immigrant are taken care of by special initial programmes. The aim of such teaching is not to suppress the first language in the minority language speakers but to enable them to use the central language sufficiently for their own educational or employment needs. They still keep the values of their first language for all functions except those directly involving speakers of the majority language.

Language Maintenance and Bilingual Language Teaching

The aim of language maintenance or 'heritage' teaching is to teach minority languages to speakers of that language. Many ethnic groups want to keep their

own language alive in their children. One possibility is the bilingualism by choice of bringing up children with two languages in the home. Many groups also collectively organise language maintenance classes outside the official educational system; in London classes for children can be found taking place in Chinese, Polish, Greek and other languages, after normal school hours or at weekends. Mandarin Chinese is now being learnt by 30 million adults around the world (Graddol, 2006).

The mainstream educational equivalent is educating minority children through their first language. At one extreme is the notion that children should be taught solely through the minority language—Bantustans in South Africa or Turkish migrants' children in Bavaria—resulting in the minority speakers becoming a segregated enclave. More common perhaps is the notion that children have the right to have access to their first language through the educational system. In Sweden, for example, there are playgroups run in minority languages for pre-school children and summer camps for older children (Arnberg, 1987). Denmark has twenty-four German kindergartens and eighteen German schools in its German-speaking areas (European Commission, 2006). The position of Maori in New Zealand has been revitalised in part through the provision of 'language nests'—pre-school playgroups in which Maori is used (Spolsky, 1989b).

The assumption of maintenance classes is that minority language speakers have the right to continue with their own language and heritage, regardless of the official central language of the country. This type of language teaching is neutral about the value of the minority language; bilingual teaching actively encourages a multilingual society. In England the terms historically evolved from 'English for Immigrants' to 'Multicultural Education' to 'Bilingual Teaching' to 'English as an Additional Language'. Changes in slogans do not of course necessarily reflect changes in practice.

One form that this emphasis on bilingualism takes is the propagation of other official languages through the school system. In Indonesia 10% of children speak Bahasa Indonesia as a first language but 75% learn it at school (Laponce, 1987). Canada has been famous for the experiment of 'immersion' schools where English-speaking children are educated through the medium of French. Whatever the hotly debated merits or demerits of immersion, it resembles elite bilingualism. Wallace Lambert (1990) indeed opposes its use with minority children as 'it fuels the subtractive process and places the minority child into another form of psycholinguistic limbo'.

International Goals of Teaching

Let us now turn to international goals for language teaching which extend beyond the society itself, i.e. the territory of supercentral languages such as Chinese and the hypercentral language English, discussed in Chapter 8. The students are assumed to be native speakers of the central language, possibly quite wrongly, say when a person is teaching French in London or the typical

multilingual class. There are many types of international goals. Some illustrations will be taken from English syllabuses for Japan (MEXT, 2011), Singapore (CPPD, 2010) and Malaysia (PPK, 2003) and the UK National Curriculum for modern languages (UK National Curriculum, 2014).

Careers That Require a Second Language

Without taking into account the situation facing immigrants practising their original profession in another country, such as Hungarian doctors practising in England, there are many careers in which knowledge of another language is important. For certain professions a particular language is necessary—for example, English for air traffic controllers or seaman. The *Angol Nyelv Alapfok* English textbook in Hungary (Edina and Ivanne, 1987) has a plot line about travel agents and tourist guides, one kind of career that uses international languages. An important function of language teaching is indeed to train people for the international business world. Degrees in Japanese are popular among London University students because they lead to jobs in the City of London, as it is apparently easier to teach a Japanese graduate finance than a finance graduate Japanese. Nations will always need individuals who are capable of bridging the gap between two countries for economic or political purposes, or indeed for the purposes of war, as in the American crash programme in foreign languages in World War Two, the forerunner of the audiolingual method. This type of goal is not about turning the student into an imitation native speaker but into an L2 user. It preserves the first language alongside the second so that the student can mediate between them—preparing an L1 report on a meeting held in the second language, for example.

Higher Education

Higher education through another language may either be in a country that uses it or located in particular countries where it is not used, as we saw earlier. In the UK 5.4% of undergraduates came from other EU countries and 12.8% from non-EU countries, with Asian students forming the largest group (HESA, 2014). The importance for the student is not the second language itself but the knowledge and qualifications that are gained through the second language. Again the first language is an important part of the situation.

Access to Research and Information

The Malaysian schools' syllabus encourages the students to 'Read and understand simple factual texts for main ideas, supporting details'. At a different level is the need for English to support various careers that are not primarily based on language—for scientists, doctors or journalists. To keep up to date or to be well informed, it may be necessary to use English.

Travel

The motivation behind many students' L2 learning is to travel abroad, that is to say to belong to the group of visitors. At one level this is the leisure activity of tourism: two weeks on the beach in Cuba does not require much Spanish. One of the four themes set for the UK GCSE examinations in French is 'Travelling from the UK to target-language country/community' (AQA, 2007). A goal for my own beginners course *People and Places* (Cook, 1980) was international travel through English; hence it emphasised talking to strangers about everyday travel functions such as getting money and food or finding the right check-in. The goal of travel is included under international goals here as it involves contact with other countries, though in a sense it is an individual goal belonging in the next section. Sometimes specialised training has been provided, say English for tourism workers in Vietnam and Cuba.

Individual Goals of Language Teaching

Some goals are not related to the society itself or its external relations, but to the students' motivations and attitudes examined in Chapter 8. Several individual goals can be recognised.

Understanding Foreign Cultures

The Japanese syllabus (MEXT, 2011) aims:

To form the foundation of pupils' communication abilities through foreign languages while developing the understanding of languages and cultures through various experiences, fostering a positive attitude toward communication, and familiarizing pupils with the sounds and basic expressions of foreign languages.

The UK National Curriculum (2014) on the other hand believes:

Learning a foreign language is a liberation from insularity and provides an opening to other cultures. A high-quality languages education should foster pupils' curiosity and deepen their understanding of the world.

In other words most educational systems see that language learning has spin-off benefits for the society of making the students more tolerant of people who speak other languages.

Understanding Language Itself

An educated person should know something of how language itself works as part of the human mind and of society. One of the four main goals of the UK

National Curriculum (DES, 1990) is 'Acquiring knowledge and understanding of the target language'. This can be gained through foreign language study, or through language awareness training.

Cognitive Training

The virtue of learning a classical language such as Latin was held to be that it trained the brain. The logical and reasoning powers of the mind were enhanced through a second language. This is supported by research that shows that children who speak two languages are more flexible at problem-solving (Ben Zeev, 1977), and are better able to distinguish form from meaning (Ianco-Worrall, 1972). Ellen Bialystok (1990), for example, asked children to say which was the biggest word in such pairs as 'hippopotamus' and 'skunk'; bilinguals were better able to keep the word size distinct from the object size and to answer the question correctly. After five months of one hour a week of Italian, English-speaking 'bilingual' children were learning to read better than their peers (Yelland, Pollard and Mercuri, 1993). One spin-off from learning any language is indeed the beneficial effects of L2 learning on using the first language. If children are deficient at listening for information, the skills involved can be developed through L2 teaching. Overall then learning another language changes the way one thinks, as seen in the last chapter. The goal of language teaching should be to make this an asset rather than a hindrance.

General Educational Values

Just as sport is held to train children how to work in a team and to promote leadership qualities, so L2 teaching can inculcate moral values. The Malaysian English syllabus (PPK, 2003) demands 'Teachers should also use materials that emphasize the principles of good citizenship, moral values, and the Malaysian way of life.'

From another angle many people support 'autonomous' language learning, where the learners take on the responsibility for themselves because this is in tune with democracy. As Leslie Dickinson (1987) puts it, 'A democratic society protects its democratic ideals through an educational process leading to independent individuals able to think for themselves.' A general value that is often cited is the insight that L2 learning provides into the L1 and its culture, or, in the words of the UK National Curriculum (DES, 1990), helping the pupils by 'considering their own culture and comparing it with the cultures of the countries and communities where the target language is spoken.'

Learning L2 as an Academic Subject

Language can also be learnt as just another subject on the curriculum, another examination to be passed. Japanese teachers are not alone in complaining that

they are in thrall to the examination system and cannot teach the English the students really need.

The very learning of a second language can be an important mark of education, another form of 'élite' bilingualism. French had this kind of status in Western Europe, German in Eastern Europe—southern Poland and Hungary are two places where I have occasionally found German more useful than English. Skutnabb-Kangas (1981, p. 96) paraphrases Fishman's account of bilingualism in the US as:

If you have learnt French at university, preferably in France and even better at the Sorbonne, then bilingualism is something very positive. But if you have learnt French from your old grandmother in Maine then bilingualism is something rather to be ashamed of.

L2 Learning as Social Change

The goals seen so far in a sense accept the world as it is rather than trying to change it; the student as an individual is expected to conform to their society. But education and L2 teaching can also be seen as a vehicle of social change. According to Paolo Freire (1972), the way out of the perpetual conflict between oppressor and oppressed is through problem-posing dialogues between teachers and students which make both more aware of the important issues in their lives and their solutions. Language teaching on a Freireian model accepts that 'authentic education is not carried out by A for B or by A about B but rather by A with B mediated by the world, giving rise to views or opinions about it'. Language teaching can go beyond accepting the values of the existing world to making it better (Wallerstein, 1983). While the Freireian approach is included here under individual goals because of its liberating effect on the individual, it may well deserve a category all of its own of goals for changing society: language teaching as political action.

Much of what has been said here about the goals of language teaching seems quite obvious. Yet it is surprising how rarely it is mentioned. Most discussions of language teaching take it for granted that everyone knows why they are teaching the second language. But the reasons for language teaching in a particular situation depend on factors that cannot be summed up adequately just as 'communication' or as 'foreign' versus 'second' language teaching. Even if teachers themselves are powerless to change such reasons, an understanding of the varying roles for language teaching in different societies and for different individuals is an important aid to teaching. A well-balanced set language teaching goals is seen in the English Curriculum, Revised (2013) for Israel, summarised below. As an afterthought I should perhaps mention that when I asked an audience at a talk 'Why do you teach languages?', one answered 'So that I have a job', perhaps the honest answer.

Box 9.4 English Curriculum, Revised (2013, p. 6) for Israel

On completion of the twelfth grade, learners should be able to:

- interact effectively in a variety of situations;
- access and make use of information from a variety of sources and media;
- present information in an organized manner;
- appreciate literature and other cultures, and develop linguistic awareness.

Box 9.5 The Goals of Teaching Language

Central goals foster a second language within a society:

- *assimilationist language teaching*: minority speakers learn the majority central language and relinquish their first language
- *transitional language teaching*: minority speakers learn to function in the majority central language for some purposes without giving up the first language
- *language maintenance and bilingual language teaching*: minority speakers learn to function in both languages

International goals foster a second language for use outside the society:

- careers that require a second language
- higher education
- access to research and information
- travel

Individual goals develop qualities in the learner rather than language per se:

- understanding of foreign cultures
- understanding language itself
- cognitive training
- general educational values
- learning the second language as an academic subject
- L2 learning as social change

Discussion Topics

- 1 Why *are* we teaching second languages? Whose decision should it be and which languages should be involved?
- 2 Are there really bilingual communities or are there two communities who speak each others' language?
- 3 Is multilingualism such a new thing or have a few countries simply been projecting their comparative lack of languages onto the rest of the world?
- 4 To what extent is second language teaching necessarily political in one way or another?
- 5 What should be the goals of language teaching in a country where the second language has no obvious use?
- 6 Does the peculiar position of English as a hypercentral language have anything to say for the teaching of other languages?
- 7 Have you achieved your goals in second language learning?

Further Reading

Apart from specific references in the text, this chapter draws on ideas and examples chiefly from: Grosjean (1982), *Life with Two Languages*; Skutnabb-Kangas (1981), *Bilingualism or Not: The Education of Minorities*; Phillipson (1992), *Linguistic Imperialism*; Canagarajah (2005), *Reclaiming the Local in Language Policy and Practice*; and Brutt-Griffler (2002), *World English: A Study of its Development*; and my own paper (Cook, 2007).

10 General Models of L2 Learning

This chapter applies some general ideas from SLA research to language teaching, with Chapter 11 going in the reverse direction from teaching to research. It deals with some of the general models and theories that researchers have devised to explain how people learn second languages rather than with individual pieces of research or different areas of language.

10.1. Universal Grammar

Focusing Questions

- What kind of language input do you think learners need in order to acquire grammar naturally?
- How much importance do you place on (a) correction by parents in L1 acquisition? (b) correction by teachers in L2 learning?

Keywords

Please see the list of some of the SLA models at the end of the chapter.

The Universal Grammar (UG) model, in the version first proposed by Chomsky in the 1980s, bases its general claims about learning on the principles and parameters grammar described in Chapter 2. What we have in our minds is a mental grammar of a language consisting of universal *principles* of language, such as the locality principle described in Chapter 2 that shows why a sentence like ‘Is Sam is the cat that black?’ is impossible in all languages because it moves elements out of their local area of the sentence, and of *parameters* on which languages vary, such as the pro-drop parameter that explains why ‘Shuo’ (speaks) is a possible sentence in Chinese but ‘Speaks’ is not possible in English, elaborated in Chapter 2. Principles account for what languages have in common, parameters for their differences. While the UG model has changed considerably in the past few years, it still relies largely on the principles and parameters idea for its account of learning.

UG claims that these principles and parameters are built into the human mind. Principles don't need to be learnt; parameters need only to be set. Learning in the UG model is a matter of getting language input for the faculty of language to work on; it is the evidence on which the learners solidify their knowledge of language (Asher, 1986). This evidence can be either positive or negative. *Positive evidence* consists of actual sentences that learners hear, such as 'The Brighton train leaves London at five'. The grammatical information in the sentence allows the learners to construct a grammar that fits the word order 'facts' of English that subjects come before verbs ('train leaves'), verbs before objects ('leaves London'), and prepositions before nouns ('at five'), by setting the parameters in a particular way. In theory the positive evidence from hearing a few sentences is sufficient to establish English grammar.

Negative evidence is rather rare for first language acquisition. It has two types. Because children never hear English sentences without subjects—such as 'Leaves'—they deduce that English sentences must have subjects, i.e. English is non-pro-drop. The same argument is used for curved bananas in the song 'I have never seen a straight banana'. The other type of negative evidence is correction: 'No you mustn't say "You was here", you must say "You were here."' Someone tells the learners that what they are doing is wrong.

While L1 children only need positive evidence in the shape of actual sentences of the language, second language learning may be different. The bulk of the evidence indeed comes from L2 sentences the learner hears—positive evidence from linguistic input. But L2 learners also have a first language available to them. Negative evidence can be used to work out what does *not* occur in the second language but might be expected to if the L2 grammar were like the L1 grammar. Spanish students listening to English will eventually notice that English lacks the subjectless sentences they are used to. The grounds for the expectation is not just guessing but the knowledge of the first language the learners have in their minds, in other words a form of transfer.

Negative evidence by correction is also different in L2 learning. In the second language classroom, correction of students' grammatical errors can, and often does, occur with high frequency, unlike the L1 child's situation. The L2 learner thus has an additional source of evidence not available to the L1 learner. Furthermore, the L2 learner often has grammatical explanations available as another source of evidence, a type of evidence absent from first language acquisition, at least up to the school years. Finally, the language input to the L2 learner could be made more learnable by highlighting various aspects of it—*input enhancement* as Mike Sharwood-Smith (1993) calls it. In writing this might take the form of different colour fonts or putting brackets around the phrases in the sentence to make the grammatical structure clear. L2 teaching could try many ways of highlighting input, again an opportunity unique to L2 learning.

The UG Model and Language Teaching

SLA research in this tradition is now often called ‘generative’, meaning approaches that ‘view language as the product of a universal set of constraints’ (Whong, 2011, p. 186), rather than Chomsky’s own use of the term to mean formal and explicit. This tradition tends to view SLA research as primarily contributing to linguistic theory rather than to language teaching. Hence it is seldom concerned with what teachers might make of UG or of the descriptive apparatus, with the honourable exception of Melinda Whong and her colleagues (2011; 2013).

Overall, UG theory suggests teachers should concentrate on those aspects of syntax that will *not* be automatically acquired by the students (Cook, 2001); there’s no point spending time teaching things which will be acquired by the students regardless of what the teacher does. As the Universal Grammar in the student’s mind is so powerful, the teacher has comparatively little to do so far as the core aspects of language are concerned. Students make few mistakes for instance with the word order parameters covered by the theory; I have never heard a student make mistakes like ‘I live London in’ for instance, i.e. treating English as a language in which postpositions come after the noun like Japanese rather than prepositions that come in front of it.

So teaching can instead concentrate on providing rich input data that students can use to set the values of the parameters: teaching is a source of data for the student’s mind to process to create a grammar in their minds. Thinking of the language of the classroom as a source of input for parameter setting may be a helpful take for language teachers: how does the language the teacher and the coursebook use contribute to students’ learning? So, in the case of the pro-drop parameter, teachers need to provide appropriate language input for the student to find out whether the setting should be pro-drop or non-pro-drop. Quite advanced L2 learners still differ from native speakers when the first and the second language have different settings for the pro-drop parameter. Thus the teacher’s awareness of parameter resetting can be helpful. Similarly, syllabuses for language teaching that use grammar need to accommodate such basic syntactic ideas, if only to indicate to teachers which areas they can avoid teaching. If the students don’t need to learn it, don’t bother to teach it.

Let us take *Changes* (Richards, 1998) as an example. The input for setting the value for the pro-drop parameter is partly the absence of subjectless sentences, which is shared by all EFL coursebooks as well as *Changes*, and partly the presence of subjects such as ‘it’ and ‘there’. Unit 5 introduces ‘it’ in time sentences such as ‘It’s five o’clock in the morning’. Unit 7 has ‘There are three bedrooms’. Unit 8 introduces ‘weather’ ‘it’ in ‘It rains from January to March’ and ‘It’ll cloud over tomorrow’, together with ‘there’. Everything necessary to set the parameter is introduced within the first weeks of the course. It is hard to imagine any language teaching that did not reflect these two aspects of the pro-drop parameter, just as it is hard for any small sample of speech not to use all the phonemes of English. Almost any language input should provide the information to set the parameter in a short space of time.

Many SLA researchers feel that the UG model is the most powerful account of L2 learning. Its attraction is that it links L2 learning to current linguistic ideas about language and language learning. It has brought to light a number of apparently simple phenomena like the pro-drop parameter that are relevant to L2 learning. Yet it would be wrong to draw conclusions from UG theory for anything other than the central area that is its proper domain, the core aspects of syntax. The UG model tackles the most profound areas of L2 acquisition, which are central to language and to the human mind. But there is rather little to say about them for language teaching. The UG principles are not learnt; the parameter settings need little attention. Any view of the whole L2 learning system has to take on board far more than these core abstract elements of UG. Classroom L2 teaching too must include many aspects of language that UG does not cover, such as social interaction. In other words the implications of 'generative' SLA for language teaching are in themselves fairly restricted and say little outside the highly abstract 'core' area of language with which the theory deals. UG theory cannot by itself be taken to support or refute the many aspects of language and language teaching that are outside its remit.

Nevertheless the UG model firmly reminds us that learners have minds, that the form that language knowledge takes in the human mind is crucial to acquisition and that this form is not arbitrary but follows natural constraints on the human mind. Furthermore, because the type of syntactic description it uses tries to account for the syntax of all languages, it automatically allows languages to be compared; in many ways it's a theory of comparative syntax. Pro-drop is simple to explain to students and something like 90% of the languages in the world are pro-drop; telling students of English about the pro-drop parameter can provide a short cut for teachers and students. The useful book *Learner English* (Swan and Smith, 2014) provides examples of mistakes from students with first languages ranging from Italian to Chinese to Thai that linguists would attribute to the pro-drop parameter.

The syntactic basis of the UG model is constantly being revised within a theory known as the Minimalist Program (Chomsky, 1995). All language learning is now reduced to the learning of the properties of vocabulary. Take the arguments for verbs described in Chapter 2. Knowing the word 'give' means knowing that it usually has three 'arguments', consisting of an animate subject and two objects: 'Mary [animate subject] gave a book [direct object] to John [indirect object]', that is to say, you cannot say 'The rock gave him a present' with a non-animate subject 'the rock' or 'The man gave a thousand pounds' without an indirect object saying who it was given to. The grammar itself is seen as universal; the differences between languages come down to how words behave in sentences. Even the acquisition of grammatical morphemes such as past tense '-ed' is considered a matter of acquiring the phrases within which these morphemes can function and the parameter settings that go with them. Hence grammatical morphemes are, so to speak, attached to words before they are fitted into the sentence.

A technical account of some of these developments can be seen in Cook and Newson (2007). The version just presented can be called Minimalism Stage I;

the later stages have reduced the apparatus of the grammar to an even barer minimum. Structure is no longer seen as a complex phrase structure but as being built up, step by step, by a single operation called Merge, which combines two items into one. All the complexity of the phrase structure tree comes from this simple operation, starting from the properties of the lexical entry such as its arguments but dispensing with terms such as Noun Phrase and Verb Phrase.

The implications of the Minimalist Program for SLA research are as yet little known, except for the anchoring to vocabulary. So the main conclusion for language teaching from UG is, oddly enough, not about grammar, but about vocabulary: words should be taught, not as tokens with isolated meanings, but as items that play a part in the sentence by dictating the structures and words they may go with in the sentence. Again the teacher's main role is that of the provider of rich language input, providing all the language food that the students need to digest and absorb.

Box 10.1 The Universal Grammar Model of L2 Learning

Key themes:

- Language is the knowledge in individual minds.
- UG shapes and restricts the languages that are learnt through principles and parameters.
- Language learning is setting values for parameters and acquiring properties of lexical items, but not acquiring principles.

Teaching implications:

- No need to teach 'principles'.
- Design optimum input for triggering parameters and acquiring vocabulary.
- Emphasise the teaching of vocabulary items with specifications of how they can occur in grammatical structures.

10.2. Processing Models

Focusing Questions

- What is the subject of the sentence 'The old man likes bananas'? How do you know?
- How important is it for students to recognise the subject of the sentence?
- Does practice make perfect in second language learning? Is it the same for all aspects of language?

Keyword

declarative/procedural memory: the memory for individual items of information (declarative memory) is different from the memory processes for handling that information (procedural memory) (Anderson, 1993).

At the opposite pole from Universal Grammar come models which see language in terms of dynamic processing and communication rather than as static knowledge. These are concerned with how people use language, rather than in sheer knowledge in the mind. One model of this type is the Competition Model developed by Brian MacWhinney and his associates (Bates and MacWhinney, 1981; MacWhinney, 1987; 2005). This derives from psychological theories of language in which L2 learning forms only a minor component.

Whatever the speaker wants to communicate has to be achieved through four aspects of language: word order, vocabulary, word forms (morphology) and intonation. As the speaker can only cope with a limited number of things at the same time, a language has to strike a balance between these four. The more a language uses intonation, the less it can rely on word order; the more emphasis on word forms, the less on word order; and so on. The different aspects of language 'compete' with each other for the same space in the mind. The results of this competition favour one or other of these aspects in different languages. A language, such as Chinese, that has complicated intonation has no grammatical inflections: intonation has won. English, with complicated word order, puts little emphasis on inflections: word order has won. Latin, with a complicated inflection system for nouns, has little use for word order, and so on.

The Competition Model has mostly been tested by experiments in which people have to find the subject of the sentence. While all languages probably have subjects they differ in how they signal which part of the sentence it is. Consider the English sentence 'He likes to drink Teeling.' What are the clues that give away which bit is the subject?

One clue is word order. In English the subject is usually the noun phrase that comes before the verb, i.e. 'He' comes before 'likes'. A second clue is grammatical agreement. The subject often agrees with the verb in number: both 'he' and 'likes' are singular in 'He likes to drink Teeling'. A third clue is grammatical case. In some languages the case of the noun is the most important clue to the subject, 'Ich liebe Bier' (I love beer) rather than 'Mich liebe Bier' in German. In English case is not relevant except for the forms of the personal pronouns, 'he/him' etc. A fourth clue is animacy. In English, unlike Japanese, whether the subject refers to something alive or not is rarely a clue to the subject. It is possible to say both 'Peter broke the window' and 'The window broke'.

Children learning their first language are therefore discovering which clues are important for that language and learning to pay less attention to the others. Each of the competing clues has a 'weighting' that affects how each sentence

is processed. Experiments have shown that speakers of English depend chiefly on word order; speakers of Dutch depend on agreement (Kilborn and Cooreman, 1987; McDonald, 1987); Japanese and Italian depend most on animacy (Harrington, 1987; Bates and MacWhinney, 1981). Learning how to process a second language means adjusting the weightings for each of the clues. L2 learners of English transfer the weightings from their first language. Thus Japanese and Italian learners select the subject because it is animate, and Dutch learners because it agrees with the verb. While their processes are not weighted so heavily as in their first languages, even at advanced stages they are still different. On the surface there need not be any sign of this in their normal language use. After all, they will still choose the subject correctly most of the time, whichever aspect they are relying on. Nevertheless their actual speech processing uses different weightings.

Processing Models and Cognitivism

The Competition Model is related to the behaviourist tradition which claims that language learning comes from outside—from input from others and from interaction and correction—rather than from inside the mind, now called ‘emergentism’. An early version was Bloomfield’s idea that language learning is a matter of associating words with things (Bloomfield, 1933). The child who imitates an adult saying ‘doll’ is favourably reinforced by adults whenever a doll is seen and unfavourably reinforced when a doll is absent. The most sophisticated behaviourist account was provided by B.F. Skinner (1957) in his book *Verbal Behavior* that was savaged by Chomsky (1959). Language to Skinner was learnt through ‘verbal operants’ that are controlled by the situation, which includes the social context, the individual’s past history and the complex stimuli in the actual situation. One type of operant is the **mand**, which is the equivalent to a command (com+mand) and is reinforced by someone carrying it out; another is the **tact**, which is equivalent to a declarative (con+tact), and which is reinforced by social approval, etc. The child builds up the complex use of language by interacting with people in a situation for a purpose—rather similar to the rationale of task-based learning.

Other psychological theories of language learning are also affiliated to behaviourism. John Anderson (1993) has proposed a ‘cognitive behaviourist’ model called ACTR, which sees learning as building up response strengths through a twofold division into **declarative** memory (individual pieces of information) and **procedural** memory (procedures for doing things). As declarative facts get better known, they are gradually incorporated into procedures, and several procedures are combined into one, thus cutting down on the amount of memory involved. SLA research has often found this distinction convenient; for example it underlies the work of O’Malley and Chamot (1990) with learning strategies described in Chapter 6. Using a related approach DeKeyser (1997) demonstrated that the learning of a second language (here an artificial language) conformed to the ideas of improvement with practice in classical psychology in terms of response time and number of errors.

Rumelhart and McClelland (1986) and others have been developing the similar theory of 'connectionism', which sees learning as establishing the strengths between the vast numbers of connections in the mind. It claims that language processing does not take place in a step-by-step fashion but that many things are being processed simultaneously. The methodology of connectionism research consists of simulated learning by the computer; language data are fed into the computer's network of connections to see whether it will 'learn' the syntactic regularities. The L2 use of connectionism then depends on the computer being first able to learn the first language before looking at the second. Blackwell and Broeder (1992) made the computer learn either Arabic or Turkish pronouns based on their frequency in language input to learners; then they added the second of the two languages. They found that the computer indeed duplicated the order of acquisition found in a naturalistic study of four L2 learners. Connectionism may be an important area for future L2 research but is thinly researched currently.

A recent model on the same lines is DST (Dynamic Systems Theory) (De Bot, 2016). This opposes the idea that language is ever static, seeing it instead as being in a constant state of flux; the language of both the learner and the user changes from moment to moment. Any apparent stability is short-lived. In addition DST recognises that variables interact over time: 'small differences between learners may become large differences and . . . the same treatment (approach in education) does not necessarily lead to convergence' (De Bot, 2016, p. 126). The variables interact constantly. This model then recognises both sides of language learning, the internal contribution of the learner and the external contribution of the language the learner encounters.

Clearly some of the research discussed in other chapters supports this model, for instance the increasing quickness of reaction time as learners make the language more automatic (DeKeyser, 1997). However, the evidence for processing models is mostly based upon ideas taken from general psychological theory or on experiments with vocabulary, rather than on L2 learning itself. It requires a continuum from 'higher' to 'lower' skills. Students who do not progress in the second language are not making the lower-level skills sufficiently automatic. Thus children learning to read a second language may be held back by lacking the low-level skill of predicting what words come next. The information-processing model resembles the other processing models in assuming that language learning is the same as the learning of other skills such as car-driving. All of them claim language is learnt by the same general principles of learning as everything else, say learning to ride a bicycle—the opposite assumptions to UG.

These approaches emphasise practice as the key to L2 learning. Practice builds up the weightings, response strengths and so on that determine how language is processed and stored. The UG model sets minimal store by practice; in principle a parameter can be set by a single sentence for ever more. Processing models, however, see language as the gradual development of preferred ways of doing things. Much language teaching has insisted on the value

of incremental practice, whether it is the audiolingual structure drill or the communicative information gap game, described in Chapter 11. The processing models remind us that language is behaviour and skill as well as mental knowledge. Some skills are learnt by doing them over and over again. These ideas are then support for the long-held teaching views about the value of practice—and more practice.

Box 10.2 Processing Models

Key themes:

- Language is processing at different levels.
- Learning involves practising to build up the proper weightings, connections etc.

Teaching implications:

- Use exercises to build up appropriate strengths of response in students.
- The classroom should maximise practice by students.

10.3. The Comprehension Hypothesis

Focusing Questions:

- Do you think you speak a second language 'better' or 'worse' in informal situations?
- How does being aware of what you are doing help in L2 learning?
- Have you ever found that you were doing something you had learnt consciously without being aware of it any more?

Keywords

A webpage summarising the Comprehension Hypothesis is available at <http://www.viviancook.uk/SLLandLT/SLL<5thed.html>.

acquisition versus learning: according to Krashen, language *acquisition* is the normal natural process of getting a language, language *learning* is a formal process through which older learners may gain a language in the classroom.

comprehensible input: acquisition requires language input that has messages for the learner to comprehend.

Monitor: aspects of language that have been learnt (not acquired) can only act as a way of Monitoring speech production.

For thirty years one of the most influential figures in language teaching has been the SLA researcher and theorist Steven Krashen. His ideas about language acquisition and language teaching have resonated with teachers at conferences all over the world and with several generations of students. To many, Krashen is the face of SLA research.

The Comprehension Hypothesis he put forward, formerly called the input hypothesis model, started as an account of some aspects of language processing in the 1970s and became an all-embracing theory in the early 1980s. However, it met with an extremely hostile reception from many SLA researchers, mostly because there seemed to be too great a leap from a small base of evidence. Since the 1990s Krashen has concentrated on reading as a source of comprehensible input for vocabulary acquisition.

The Comprehension Hypothesis ‘states that we acquire language and develop literacy when we understand messages, that is, when we understand what we hear and what we read, when we receive “comprehensible input”’ (Krashen, 2003). This depends on defining two crucial elements:

- ‘acquisition’: language *acquisition* is the natural process of getting a language, language *learning* is a formal process through which older learners may gain a language in the classroom
- ‘comprehensible input’: language input that has messages that the learner can comprehend, by stretching language resources

In one sense the distinction between acquisition and learning is obvious and familiar. The UG model, for instance, makes a distinction between the natural knowledge acquired through the faculty of language and the knowledge of language that could have been learnt by other faculties of the mind, say the reasoning faculty. Harold Palmer (1926) distinguished ‘spontaneous’ from ‘studial’ capacities for language learning. Krashen’s model, however, insists that learnt knowledge is never converted into acquired knowledge.

Figure 10.1 puts together the different aspects of Krashen’s Model.

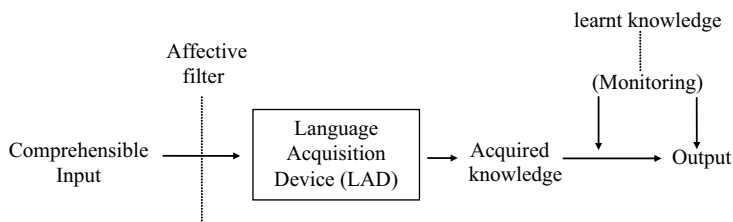


Figure 10.1 Krashen’s model of L2 learning and production.

The learner hears comprehensible input—language with messages; however some of it is filtered out by an ‘Affective Filter’ set by preconceptions and inhibitions about language etc. This input is processed by a Language Acquisition

Device (LAD) into Acquired Knowledge, i.e. Krashen builds in a Chomskyan black-box that automatically acquires language and he does not specify it in more detail. In the production of speech, seen on the right of the figure, this Acquired Knowledge is used to produce utterances. Any Learned Knowledge that the person has acquired by other means (learning) is used to Monitor this process or the Output itself.

Krashen argues that reading promotes vocabulary acquisition. According to a recent paper (Krashen, 2013), *Sustained Silent Reading* which requires students to read on their own in the second language leads to vocabulary acquisition, as do the richness of the printed word available to the students, reading aloud and listening to stories. *Reach out and Read* is a clever idea for reminding parents about reading in doctors' surgeries etc.

The main implication for teaching is the crucial importance of comprehension; everything in acquisition depends upon the learner trying to understand. Teaching largely consists of ways of providing appropriate things for the students to understand and of helping them to understand the parts that are not already within their language knowledge. This is captured in what Krashen calls the single pedagogical principle: 'Maximise comprehensible input' (Krashen, 1981b). Despite all the ways in which they differ, all successful teaching methods have always taken advantage of this by trying to convey meaning to the students. According to his recent thinking, we need to go beyond comprehensible input to compelling input—input that interests us so much we are compelled to read on.

The general premises of the Input Hypothesis model were incorporated by Krashen and Terrell into the Natural Approach to teaching (Krashen and Terrell 1983), leading to a series of coursebooks for teaching several languages (Terrell et al., 1993). The Natural Approach favours on the one hand **Affective-Humanistic techniques** such as dialogues, interviews and exercises which draw on the students' lives ('what do you have for breakfast today?') and imagination ('give Napoleon advice about his Russian campaign'), on the other hand **Problem-solving activities** such as washing a car or finding the way, plus some **Games activities** ('what is strange about . . . a bird swimming?') and **Content activities** in which another academic subject is involved. The actual mixture of these often resembles communicative language teaching. The crucial factor for Krashen, like other people working with listening-based methods, is that students must concentrate on listening not speaking. Having to speak before they are ready may actively harm them—the opposite to most communicative lessons where students are encouraged to speak from the very beginning.

The process of speaking a second language depends primarily on acquired knowledge. Those who have a conscious learnt knowledge of the second language are able to use it only as a Monitor of what they have already acquired. Someone who wants to say something in a second language will be able to Monitor what they are saying via the conscious grammatical rules they know—checking whether the tense is right, for instance. Krashen is not just

saying that this is *one* way of using learnt knowledge. After all everyone probably checks out their knowledge from time to time by muttering, say, ‘The mites go up and the tights come down’ to remember ‘stalagmite’ versus ‘stalactite’. Rather Krashen is saying this is the *only* use of learnt knowledge. Consciously learnt rules are never turned into acquired knowledge. Conscious learning never leads to anything more than the ability to Monitor what you want to say or write when the circumstances allow.

Box 10.3 The Comprehension Hypothesis

Key themes:

- Language is acquired by trying to make sense of messages that the learner hears.
- Natural acquisition is crucial; formal learning is optional and only useful as a quality check on production.

Teaching implications:

- ‘Maximise comprehensible input’, minimise non-voluntary production.
- Use a range of listening-based activities.

10.4. The Socio-Educational Model

Focusing Questions

- How crucial to success are the attitudes that the students bring to the classroom?
- What stereotype do you think your students have of the target culture?

Keyword

integrativeness: how the learner relates to the target culture in various ways (see also Chapter 7).

Many would say all the models described so far neglect the most important part of language—its social aspect, Lang₄. There are two versions of this. One is that L2 learning usually takes place in a social situation where people interact with each other, whether in the classroom or outside. The second version is that L2 learning takes place within a society and has a function within that society. This covers the local and international goals of language teaching discussed in Chapter 9.

A complex view of L2 learning called the Socio-Educational Model has been put forward by Robert Gardner (1985; 2007) to explain how individual factors and general features of society interact in L2 learning. Each of these factors is precisely measured through the research instrument he has developed called the AMTB (Attitudes and Motivation Test Battery), part of which was illustrated in Chapter 7. The two main ingredients in the learners' success he has always seen as motivation and ability. Motivation consists of two chief factors: *attitudes to the learning situation*, i.e. to the teacher and the course, and *integrativeness*, which is a complex of factors about how the learner regards the culture reflected in the second language. Put together with other factors, these elements yield the model seen in the figure below, which shows the process that leads to a successful or unsuccessful language learning outcome.

But where do attitudes and integrativeness come from? The answer according to Gardner is the educational setting and cultural context within which the students are placed. A society sets a particular store by L2 learning; it has stereotyped views of foreigners and of certain nationalities, and it sees the classroom in a particular way. Hence one way of predicting if students will be successful at L2 learning is to look, not at the attitudes of the students themselves, but at those of their parents or indeed of society at large. The crucial factors are how the learner regards the speakers of a second language, as seen in Chapter 8, and how highly he or she values L2 learning in the classroom.

The model also incorporates ability, how good the student is, which primarily affects learning in formal situations rather than in informal situations outside the classroom. These main factors do not lead to L2 success in themselves except through people's reactions to the actual teaching context, whether formal or informal. The model depicts a process in time, during which the students' background setting affects their motivation, and then their motivation and ability affect their learning situation and so proceed to a successful or unsuccessful outcome.

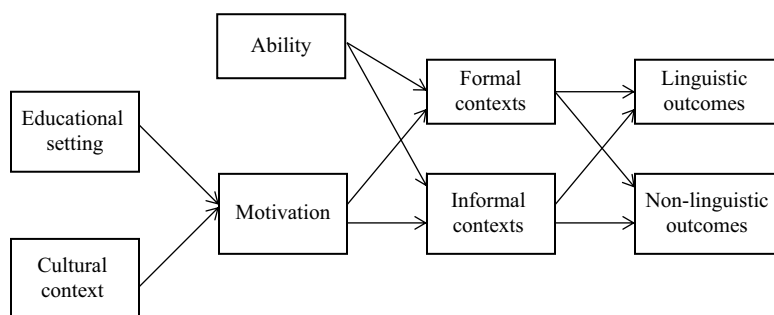


Figure 10.2 Robert Gardner's Socio-Educational Model (Gardner, 2007).

The socio-educational model chiefly applies to language teaching for local goals, where the students have definite views on the L2 group whose language they are learning through everyday contact with them within the

society, say the position of Chinese learners of English in Vancouver. Students who are learning for international goals may not have such definite opinions. For example, English teaching in Cuba involves little contact with English-speaking groups except tourists.

The implications for teaching mirror the discussion in Chapter 11 of the roles of language teaching in society. The total situation in which the students are located plays a crucial part in their learning. If the goals of teaching are incompatible with their perceptions of the world and the social milieu in which they are placed, teaching has little point. Teachers either have to fit their teaching to the roles of language teaching for that person or that society, or they have to attempt to reform the social preconceptions of their students, difficult as this may be in the teeth of all the pressures that have been exerted on the students by the social milieu for all their lives. If they do not, the students will not succeed. This model also reminds the teacher of the nature of the L2-using situation. The goal of teaching is to enable a non-native speaker to use the language effectively, not to enable him or her to pass as native, as discussed in Chapter 9.

Box 10.4 The Socio-Educational Model

Key theme:

Success in classroom second language acquisition depends upon the two main factors—integrativeness and attitudes to the learning situation—in a complex interaction with other factors, such as the student's ability and the type of learning context.

Teaching implications:

For some students the emphasis should be on integrativeness; for others with say ELF goals, it should be on instrumental motivation. Changing long-standing motivations in the students is difficult.

10.5. The Interaction Approach

Focusing Questions

- What do you do when you don't understand what someone else has just said?
- What do you do when you think you have made a mistake in speaking?

Keywords

negotiation for meaning: solving mutual difficulties in conversation by means of various conversational moves.
recasts: rephrasing incorrect student utterances.

The Interaction Approach to SLA research has evolved for thirty years, primarily in the United States; it sees talking to other people as the key to acquiring a language. The following sections discuss three of its loosely connected tenets.

Language Is Acquired through Interaction

In the 1960s considerable research looked at how parents interact with children in the first language, with largely inconclusive results. Direct correction, in which the child's sentence is corrected by the parent, occurs very rarely; in one famous study by Christine Howe (1981) only 1 of 1711 utterances by mothers involved correction. Roger Brown and Ursula Bellugi (1964) did find a process of 'imitation with expansion' in which the parent feeds back the child's sentence in an altered form:

CHILD: Baby highchair

MOTHER: Baby is in the highchair

Others, however, such as Nelson, Carskaddon and Bonvillian (1973), did not find any beneficial effects on learning from such exchanges; see Cook and Newson (2007) for a further discussion. Nevertheless psychologists like Jerome Bruner have insisted that structured interaction is the driving force in first language acquisition.

What is the role of interaction in the learning of second languages? In 1981 Mike Long suggested that it's not what the learner hears but how they are interacted with that matters (Long, 1981). In its full form this became known as the Interaction Hypothesis (Long, 1996), essentially that second language acquisition depends on profiting from conversation which makes concessions to the learner through processes of topic clarification and repair.

Learning through Interaction Involves Negotiation of Meaning

The central concept in the Interaction Approach is 'negotiation of meaning'—'the process in which, in an effort to communicate, learners and competent speakers provide and interpret signals of their own and their interlocutor's perceived comprehension' (Long, 1996, p. 418). In other words, useful interaction involves keeping the conversation rolling by continuously resolving any difficulties in comprehension. Some of the different possibilities are: 'repetitions, confirmations, reformulations, comprehension checks, clarification requests etc' (Long, 1996, p. 418).

Rather like the communication strategies seen in Chapter 6, negotiation for meaning is keeping the channel of communication open—the equivalent of saying 'are you still there?' when the other person on the phone seems to fall silent. Almost invariably, these interactional moves have been discussed in terms of conversation between native and non-native speakers: comprehensibility has been weighted towards the native speaker rather than towards successful L2 users. An exception is research by Garcia Mayo (2007) who found L2

students talking to each other managed to successfully negotiate meaning in a variety of ways, i.e. 'scaffolding' each other's use of language.

Teaching involves not only these ordinary conversational moves but also those specific to the teaching situation in which the aim is learning. One is direct correction. Teachers have perhaps always corrected and always will. In my experience students usually complain when their teachers don't correct rather than when they correct them too much.

Box 10.5 Types of Feedback by Teachers to Students (Lyster and Ranta, 1997)

- *explicit corrections* directly showing correct form
- *recasts* reformulating the sentence without the error
- *clarification requests* checking potential misunderstanding
- *metalinguistic feedback* commenting on wellformedness
- *elicitation* to get the correct form by pausing, asking questions or making them rephrase
- *repetition* by repeating the students' sentence, usually with a particular intonation

Box 10.5 shows a well-known list of types of correction devised by Roy Lyster and Leila Ranta (1997). In **explicit corrections** the teacher directly provides the correct form:

He goed to the movies.
No he went to the movies.

In **recasts** the teacher rephrases the student's mistake:

He went to the movies, did he?

In **clarification requests** the teacher tries to clear up possible misunderstandings:

You mean he went to the movies?

Elicitations are when the teacher tries to get the student to make a second attempt:

Eh? What do you mean?

Repetitions involve the teacher repeating but highlighting the mistake:

He goed to the cinema?

While all of these could occur in non-classroom conversation, they are more focussed on the language mistake than the meaning and doubtless occur with a much higher frequency in teaching than would be acceptable in ordinary conversation.

The idea of recasts has proved popular among researchers. An example from an ESF (European Science Foundation) transcript is:

A: I think one man er very happy only.

B: You think he was a very happy man?

B has recast A's utterance in a way that does not bring the conversation to a halt, as other types of correction would do, but reformulates the L2 user's utterance in a more acceptable way. The full definition by Lyster and Ranta (1997, p. 46) is 'Recasts involve the teacher's reformulation of all or part of a student's utterance minus the error'. One issue is whether the student takes this as a simple aid to the conversation (decoding) or as an aid to learning, singling out something they should be paying attention to (codebreaking). According to YoungHee Sheen (2004), 60% of feedback in a variety of language teaching contexts involved recasts. Long (1996) sees this ambiguity as their very usefulness; the student is not sidetracked from the meaning of what is being said but nevertheless learns about the form of the language. Z.-H. Han (2002) taught tense consistency to students with and without recasts and suggested that important factors that affected the extent to which students benefited from recasts were intensity of instruction and developmental readiness to acquire the point in question.

The most obvious drawback to the Interaction Approach is that, while there is considerable research describing how interaction occurs, there is still little proof of its importance to second language learning rather than to second language comprehension, whether correction or recasts. Indeed Pauline Foster (1998) found that most students in the classroom would avoid making negotiation moves if they possibly could, perhaps because it exposed their ignorance in public. Undoubtedly interaction helps some aspects of second language learning but it is not clear how crucial this may be compared to all the other factors in the complex second language learning situation. Teachers' interaction patterns are probably based on their experience and training; we do not know if there are better patterns they could adopt than these pre-existing patterns. Moreover the analysis is usually based on interview type data or classroom data involving a native speaker and a non-native student; hence it is not representative of normal L2 usage in the world outside the classroom which often takes place between L2 users. Ernesto Macaro (2006) argues that the 'unswerving faith in the comprehensible input—negotiation—comprehensible output has been entirely due to the fact that the proponents of these theories and hypotheses simply did not speak the first language of their subjects or students'; in a situation where the teacher could speak the same language as the students they would resort to codeswitching. In other words 'natural' L2 learning would involve an L1 component and teaching becomes 'unnatural' when its reliance on the L2 forces the learner into these forms of interaction.

The teaching applications are partly to do with communication and task-based learning, discussed in Chapter 11. Mostly the Interaction Approach to teaching has been seen as encouraging the teacher to interact with students in the classroom and to use activities that require mutual interaction. Patsy Lightbown and Nina Spada (2006) recommend recasts rather than corrections with adults but not with children as ‘learners seem to hear them as confirmation of meaning rather than correction of form’. Since the approach is based on what teachers already do, it seems fairly circular to feed it back to them as advice on what they *should* do; it’s only allowable if the expert says so. How many teachers trained in the past 40 years run inflexible classrooms with no interaction with the students or between the students?

Box 10.6 The Interaction Approach

Key theme:

Conversational interaction involving negotiation of meaning is the crucial element in second language learning.

Teaching implications:

Teaching means setting up tasks that involve negotiation of meaning. Teacher or peer feedback is important to interaction, particularly through recasts.

10.6. Socio-Cultural SLA Theory

Focusing Questions

- What do you think is the relationship between what you say and what is going on in your mind?
- How much do you think language learning comes from within the child, how much from assistance from other people?

Keywords

internalisation: in Vygotsky’s theory, the process through which the child turns the external social use of language into internal mental use.

zone of proximal development (ZPD): to Vygotsky, the gap between the child’s low point of development, as measured individually, and high point, as measured on social tasks; in SLA research often used to refer to the gap between the learner’s current stage and the next point on some developmental scale the learner is capable of reaching.

scaffolding: the process that assists the learner in getting to the next point in development, in socio-cultural theory consisting of social assistance by other people rather than of physical resources such as dictionaries.

One of the most influential models over the past fifteen years has been socio-cultural theory, which emphasises the importance of interaction from a rather different perspective. This theory takes its starting point from the work of Lev Vygotsky, a leading figure in early Soviet psychology who died in 1934 but whose impact in the West came from the translations of his main books into English in 1962 and 1978 (misleadingly in much of the SLA literature, his works are cited as if they appeared in the 1960s to 1980s, rather than being written in the 1930s). Vygotsky (1934/1962) was chiefly concerned with the child's development in relationship to the first language. His central claim is that, initially, language is a way of acting for the child, an external fact: saying 'milk' is a way of getting milk. Gradually language becomes internalised as part of the child's mental activity: 'milk' becomes a concept in the mind. Hence at early stages children may seem to use words like 'if' and 'because' correctly but in fact have no idea of their meaning, rather like Eve Clark's features view of vocabulary development seen in Chapter 3. There is a tension between external and internal language, with the child progressively using language for thinking rather than for action. Language is not just social, not just mental, but both—Lang₄ as well as Lang₅.

Vygotsky also perceived a potential gap between the child's actual developmental stage as measured by standard tests on individual children and the stage they are at when measured by tasks involving cooperation with other people. This he called 'the zone of proximal development' (ZPD), defined as 'the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in cooperation with more capable peers' (1935/1978, p. 86). In this zone come things that the child cannot do by himself or herself but for which the child needs the assistance of others; in time these will become part of the child's internal knowledge. This means 'the only good learning is that which is in advance of development'. In one sense the ZPD parallels the well-known idea of 'reading readiness'; in Steiner schools for example children are not taught to read until they show certain physical signs of development, such as loss of milk teeth. And it is also a parallel to the teachability concept in Processability Theory seen in Chapter 3; you can't teach things that are currently out of the learner's reach. The distinctive aspect of Vygotsky's ZPD is that the gap between the learner's current state and their future knowledge is bridged by assistance from others; learning demands social interaction so that the learner can internalise knowledge out of external action. Any new function 'appears twice: first on the social level, and later on the individual level; first *between* people (interpsychological) and then *inside* the child (intrapsychological)' (Vygotsky, 1935/1978, p. 57).

The ZPD has been developed in SLA socio-cultural theory far beyond Vygotsky's original interpretation. In particular social assistance is interpreted through the concept of scaffolding, taken from one of the major later figures in twentieth century developmental psychology, Jerome Bruner, who spent much time specifically researching the language of young children. He saw children as developing language in conjunction with their parents through conversational 'formats' that gradually expand over time until they die out; classic examples are nappy-changing routines and peekaboo games, which seem to be universal (Bruner, 1983). The child's language acquisition is scaffolded by the helpful adult who provides a continual supporting aid to the child's internalisation of language.

In an SLA context, scaffolding has been used in many diverse senses. For some, anything the learner consults or uses constitutes scaffolding, say the use of grammar books or dictionaries; virtually anything that happens in the classroom can then count as scaffolding, say the traditional teaching style known as IRF (initiation, response, and feedback moves) or any kind of correction by the teacher. Others maintain the original Vygotskian idea of the ZPD as the teacher helping the student; scaffolding is social mediation involving two people and is performed by a person who is an expert. Some have extended scaffolding to include help from people at the same level as the student, i.e. fellow students. In teaching terms this includes everything from teacher-directed learning to carrying out tasks in pairs and groups—the liberating effect of the communicative revolution of the 1970s. Swain and Lapkin (2002) combined both approaches by having an expert reformulate students' descriptions and then having the students discuss the reformulation with a fellow student, which turned out to be effective.

For this SLA theory development seems to mean greater success in doing the task. For example Amy Ohta (2000) describes the development of a learner of Japanese called Becky in a single classroom session through detailed grammatical correction and prompting from a fellow student Hal, so that by the end she has reached a new developmental level; she has internalised the social interaction and become more autonomous. In a sense this is micro-development over minutes rather than the macro-development over years mostly used by developmental psychologists.

Like the Interaction Hypothesis, socio-cultural theory bases itself on the dialogue that learners encounter in the classroom. It is broader in scope in that it emphasises the assistance provided by others, of which the repairs to monolingual L2 conversation form only a small part. It has much higher aims in basing the learning that takes place through social interaction on a whole theory of mental development. Its essence is what Merrill Swain (2000, p. 102) calls 'collaborative dialogue'—'dialogue in which speakers are engaged in problem solving and knowledge building'. Hence it is not the dialogue of the Interaction Hypothesis in which people exchange information, i.e. communication, but an educational dialogue in which people create new knowledge, i.e. learning. Dialogue provides, not so much negotiation for meaning, as assistance in internalisation.

The obvious teaching implications are structured situations in the classroom in which the students cooperate with the teacher or with fellow students, as shown in numerous detailed studies of L2 classrooms. In a sense this is the same message as the other interaction-based teaching applications of SLA research; for instance it can provide an underpinning in development psychology for the task-based learning movement, discussed in Chapter 11. In another sense it is too vague to give very precise teaching help; it could be used to justify almost anything in the classroom that involved an element of social interaction by the students and teacher. In particular it is hard to see what the goals of language teaching are for socio-cultural theory; it concerns the process of development, not the endpoint. Apart from the knowledge of language itself as an internalised mental entity, the only other gain from second language learning seems to be the enhanced metalinguistic awareness of the students.

Box 10.7 Socio-Cultural Theory

Key themes:

Language learning is social mediation between the learner and someone else during which socially acquired knowledge becomes internal.

It takes place through scaffolding by an expert or a fellow-learner.

Teaching implication:

Use collaborative dialogue in the classroom through structured cooperative tasks.

10.7. Multi-Competence—The L2 User Perspective

Focusing Questions

- Do you speak your first language any differently because you know a second language?
- Do students want to speak like native speakers? Can they actually achieve it?

Keywords

multi-competence: ‘the overall system of a mind or a community that uses more than one language’.

second language (L2) user: the person who knows a second language, at whatever level, considered as a user rather than a learner.

Most of the models seen so far assume that it is unusual to speak more than one language. Whether it is Universal Grammar or the Competition Model, the starting point is knowledge of one language, not knowledge of several languages: a second language is an add-on to a first language model. Only the Social-Educational Model is specifically a model of how L2 learning occurs rather than an extrapolation from general models of L1 learning. Thus mostly they regard L2 learning as inefficient because the learners seldom reach the same level as the L1 child.

But why should they? By definition L2 learners are not native speakers—at least according the definition advanced in Chapter 1, ‘a monolingual person who still speaks the language they learnt in childhood’. They can never be native speakers of another language, without time travel back to their childhood. The need is to recognise the distinctive nature of knowing two or more languages without subordinating L2 knowledge to monolingual knowledge. As Sridhar and Sridhar (1986) point out, ‘Paradoxical as it may seem, second language acquisition researchers seem to have neglected the fact that the goal of SLA is bilingualism.’

Chapter 1 introduced the term ‘multi-competence’ to refer to the overall knowledge of both the first language and the L2 interlanguage—two languages in the one mind. The multi-competence model develops the implications of this for second language acquisition. The key insight is that the person who speaks more than one language should be considered in their own right, not as a monolingual who has tacked another language on to their repertoire. Since this is the model that I have been concerned with myself, some of the basic ideas are met everywhere in this book.

The L2 User in Language Teaching

The multi-competence approach suggests that key factors in language teaching are the L2 user and L2 use of language. Successful L2 users are not just passing for native speakers but expressing their unique status as people who can function in two cultures. The major consequences for language teaching are twofold and discussed in the next two sections.

Teaching Goals Should Be L2 User Goals, Not Approximations to the Native Speaker

If L2 users differ from monolingual speakers, the benefits of learning a second language are becoming a different kind of person, not just adding another language. This is the basis for the argument presented in Chapter 9 that the proper goal of language teaching should be the proficient L2 user who is capable of using both languages, not the monolingual who functions in only one. The overall goals of language teaching should reflect what L2 users can do; the teaching materials should incorporate situations of L2 use and features of L2 user language, not those belonging to monolinguals. The native speaker teacher is not necessarily a good model for the student, as developed in Chapter 11.

The First Language Should Be Recognised in Language Teaching

If both languages are always linked in the mind, it is impossible for both of them not to be present in the students' minds at all times. It is an illusion that permitting only the second language in the classroom forces the students to avoid their first language; it simply makes it invisible. Hence, as discussed in Chapter 6, teachers should think how teaching can make systematic use of both languages rather than try to exclude the first language. The insistence of the multi-competence approach that the L2 user is at the centre of language teaching frees teaching from some long-standing assumptions. Teachers should be telling students how successful they are as L2 users, rather than implying they are failures for not speaking like natives.

Box 10.8 Multi-Competence and Language Teaching**Key themes:**

Multi-competence theory claims that L2 users are not the same as the monolingual native speaker because their knowledge of the second language and their knowledge of their first language is not the same and they think in different ways.

Teaching implications:

- Aim at the goal of creating successful L2 users, not imitation native speakers.

Make systematic use of the first language in the classroom.

10.8. Comparing L1 and L2 Learning**Focusing Questions**

- Do you think people learn a second language in the same way they learnt a first?
- If so, what difference does it make to language teaching?

Ever since it became an independent discipline the relationship between L1 and L2 learning has interested SLA researchers. Do we need a separate model for second language acquisition or is SLA just a minor variant of first language acquisition? For example UG is essentially a model of first language learning; hence much research has tried to see how well SLA fits the UG framework rather than treating it independently. Multi-competence on the other hand

assumes that knowledge of more than one language involves a system that is qualitatively different from the knowledge of only one; it is how UG accommodates multi-competence that is interesting.

What are the differences and similarities between L1 and L2? Some are intrinsic to the comparison—L2 learners in classrooms are usually older than L1 monolingual children in the home. Some of them may be accidental in that teaching could make the two situations similar—banning written language for beginners for instance approximates to the child's situation.

The Presence of Another Language in the L2 Learner's Mind

L2 learners already have at least one other language in their minds; they start off at a different point from the L1 child because of the first language they already know. Yet, as we saw in the last chapter, for 150 years mainstream teaching has advocated using the first language in the classroom as much as possible on the grounds that, since the L1 child cannot fall back on another language, neither should the L2 student. But this ignores the fact that the second language cannot be isolated from the first. This difference is then unavoidable.

The Different Situations

The first language is acquired in a family care-taking situation. L2 learners, however, encounter the second language in a variety of situations, illustrated in L2 user groups listed in the last chapter. Virtually all L1 children end up learning the language appropriate for their dialect, class, age, gender, etc. Success in L2 learning is a matter of individual variation; success in L1 acquisition is not. To some extent then language teaching could try to imitate the situation of L1 children.

The Differences in Language Interaction and Language Features

L1 children get different language input from L2 learner. In natural contact situations, the natural L2 input may be closer to that in L1 acquisition. Language teaching is almost inconceivable in practice without simplified language; approaches using authentic uncensored materials have usually either been used at a late stage or have used tiny amounts of speech. Language teaching could then try to duplicate the characteristics of language spoken to children. One notorious suggestion was that L2 learners should be taught the sentences of young L1 children as a model rather than those of adults.

Processes of Maturation

L2 learners are usually older and more mature than L1 children. So they have advantages in terms of working memory, conceptual and social development,

command of speech styles, and so on. Once a child has learnt how to mean, as Halliday puts it, they cannot regress to the person who doesn't know how to mean: language itself is there for the L2 learner, even if the specific second language is not. In particular literacy changes people's thinking (Luria, 1976) and brain structures (Petersen et al., 2000). L1 learning inevitably differs from L2 learning wherever it depends on processes of maturation in the growing child.

For these reasons it is tricky to decide whether any model of first language acquisition has anything to say about second language acquisition. It is premature to make the deductions from L1 learning that language teachers have been prone to over the years, such as:

- *speech should come before writing* in language teaching because children learn to speak before they learn to write. Literate adults are not the same as non-literate small children and writing represents a way into language not available to the child.
- *language functions need to be taught* in language teaching. We have all learnt how to use language functions and, except for a few that are culturally variable, we do not need to learn them from scratch in a new language: what we need to learn is the language to express them.
- *the classroom should mirror the L1 acquisition situation*. As we have seen, this may be largely impossible; L2 students are adults, or at least are substantially older than L1 learning children. The ways in which the classroom can be like a natural L1 situation are very limited.
- *only the L2 should be used in the classroom*. The L1 child only hears one language and so the L2 student should be the same. But this ignores the crucial point that the L2 learner has another language by definition; there is no comparison.

All of these have then been put forward as the application of L1 learning to teaching methodology; none of them have any justification from L1 acquisition. This is not of course to say they are necessarily wrong—there may be other, valid reasons for teaching language in these ways.

10.9. General Issues

All of the models of L2 learning account persuasively for what they consider the crucial aspects of L2 learning. What is wrong with them is not their claims about their own front yard so much as their tendency to claim that the whole street belongs to them. Each of them is at best a piece of the jigsaw. Do the pieces add up to a single picture? Can a teacher believe (i) that language is mental knowledge (ii) gained by assigning weightings to factors (iii) by those with positive attitudes towards the target culture? This combines three arguably incompatible theories of language acquisition from different disciplines and seems a good example of what George Orwell calls *doublethink*—the belief in two contradictory ideas at the same time. However the differences

between the areas of L2 learning dealt with by each model mean that they are by no means irreconcilable. UG applies only to ‘core’ grammar; response weightings apply to speech processing; attitudes to behaviour in academic classrooms. Only if the models dealt with the same areas would they come into conflict. There is no overall framework for all the models as yet. One day when they are fitted together, an overall model of L2 learning will emerge. At the moment there are many area-specific models, each of them providing some useful insights into its own province of L2 learning; there is not much point in debating whether a bicycle or an airplane is an easier way of getting from place to place; both have their proper uses. Hence there is not much to be gained by debating which overall model is best; take from each what is useful.

For the sake of their students, teachers have to deal with L2 learning as a whole, as seen in Chapter 11. It is premature for any one of these models to be adopted as the sole basis for teaching, because, however right or wrong they may be, none of them covers more than a small fraction of what the students need. As Spolsky (1989a) wisely remarks, ‘any theory of second language learning that leads to a single method must be wrong’.

Discussion Topics

- 1 Are there parts of the second language that we do not need to teach, and parts that are based on transfer from our first language?
- 2 How should vocabulary be taught in relationship to grammatical structure?
- 3 What parts of the second language can be built up by practice? What parts cannot?
- 4 How can teachers help students go from the formal language of the classroom to the informal language outside?
- 5 How much of students’ success would you attribute to motivation, how much to other factors?
- 6 Is it realistic to claim that the target of L2 teaching should be the L2 user or do we have to compromise with students’ beliefs that they want to be like native speakers?
- 7 Do think you have gained more from acquiring a second language than just the language?

Further Reading

Teaching applications of the UG model are discussed in Cook (1994) in T. Odlin (ed.) *Perspectives on Pedagogical Grammar*, and in Whong (2011); its link to L2 learning is discussed in Cook and Newson (2007), *Chomsky’s Universal Grammar*. Useful overall accounts of some L2 models are in Mitchell, Myles and Marsden (2012), *Second Language Learning Theories*, and VanPatten and Williams (2006), *Theories in Second Language Acquisition*. A synthesising

overview of L2 learning can be found in Spolsky (1989a), *Conditions for Second Language Learning*. The Competition Model is discussed more critically in Cook (1993), *Linguistics and Second Language Acquisition*. The multi-competence model is treated extensively in Cook (2003), *Effects of the L2 on the L1*, and in Cook and Li Wei (2016), *The Cambridge Handbook of Linguistic Multi-Competence*; its relationship to language teaching is described in Scott (2009), *Double Talk: Deconstructing Monolingualism in Classroom Second Language Learning*.

A List of Some Learning Models, Theories and Approaches

Competition Model: this claims that languages differ over which aspect of language they emphasise in speech processing, whether intonation, vocabulary, word order or inflections, particularly over the clues that tell you which is the subject of the sentence.

Comprehension Hypothesis: ‘we acquire language and develop literacy when we understand messages, that is, when we understand what we hear and what we read, when we receive “comprehensible input”’ (Krashen, 2003).

connectionism: a theory that claims all mental processing depends on developing and using the connections in the mind.

DST (Dynamic Systems Theory): ‘different variables . . . do not have a fixed effect, but that they interact and that that interaction itself changes over time, so not only do motivation and success interact, but this interaction changes as well’ (De Bot, 2016, p. 126).

emergentism: language emerges from a combination of basic non-linguistic factors.

Generative Second Language Acquisition: an approach to second language acquisition largely based on recent versions of Chomskyan theories of syntax.

interaction hypothesis: successful second language acquisition depends crucially on conversational interaction with others.

multi-competence: the L2 user’s mind relates different languages in complex ways and is distinctively different from the monolingual’s.

Processability Theory: the development of syntax in the individual is constrained by the learner’s memory capacity.

socio-cultural SLA theory: learning takes place through dialogue and is helped by scaffolding from a more expert speaker.

Socio-Educational Model: explains how individual factors and general features of society interact in L2 learning.

Universal Grammar (UG): ‘the system of principles, conditions, and rules that are elements or properties of all human languages . . . the essence of human language’ (Chomsky, 1976, p. 29), also known as the language faculty.

11 Second Language Learning and Language Teaching Styles

This chapter looks at some general questions of teaching methodology in the light of SLA research. It thus reverses the direction of Chapter 10 by proceeding from teaching to L2 learning. It also provides an overview of the diversity of alternative language teaching methods that teachers should be aware of, if only to remind them that there are many successful ways in which languages can be taught. As Kipling said:

Here's my wisdom for your use, . . .
*"There are nine and sixty ways of constructing tribal lays,
And-every-single-one-of-them-is-right!"*

The term 'teaching method' is used in most of this book as a broad cover term for the different activities that go on in language teaching. Glosses on the main well-known methods are given at the end of Chapter 1. Various suggestions have been put forward over the years for making the term 'method' more precise or for abandoning it altogether. Some believe we are now in a post Methods stage of evolution (Kumaravadevelu, 2006). The traditional distinction is between overall *approaches*, such as the oral approach; *methods*, such as the audiolingual method; and teaching *techniques*, such as drills (Anthony, 1963).

To avoid the various associations and prejudices that these terms conjure up, I prefer the more neutral terms 'teaching technique' and 'teaching style', which will be used in this chapter. The actual point of contact with the students is the **teaching technique**. Thus a structure drill in which students intensively practise a structure is one technique, dictation is another, information gap exercises another, and so on. A technique, as Clark (1984) puts it, is a 'label for what we do as teachers'. Teachers combine these techniques in various ways within a particular **teaching style**. Put a structure drill with a repetition dialogue and a role-play and you get the audiolingual style with its dependence on the spoken language, on practice, and on structure. Put a functional drill with an information gap exercise and a role-play and you get the communicative style with its broad assumptions about the importance of communication in the classroom. A teaching style is a loosely connected set of teaching techniques believed to share the same goals of language teaching and the same views of language

and of L2 learning. The word 'style' partly reflects the element of fashion and changeability in teaching; it is not intended as an academic term with a precise definition but as a loose overall label that we can use freely to talk about teaching. A teacher who might feel guilty switching from one 'method' to another or in mixing 'methods' within one lesson has less compunction about changing 'styles'; there is no emotional commitment to a 'style'.

This chapter looks at six main teaching styles: the academic teaching style common in academic classrooms, the audiolingual style that emphasises structured oral practice, the communicative style that aims at interaction between people both in the classroom and outside, the task-based learning style that gets students doing tasks, the mainstream EFL style which combines aspects of the others, and, finally, other styles that look beyond language itself. These six styles are loose labels for a wide range of teaching rather than clear-cut divisions. The first four are arranged in roughly chronological order with the oldest style first.

The range of styles demonstrate the idea that no single form of teaching suits all students and all teachers. Teachers should always remember that, despite the masses of advice they are given, they have a choice. All of these methods, techniques and styles are still available for people to use, regardless of whether they are in fashion or not. Indeed it is doubtless true that never a day goes by when they are not all being used successfully somewhere in the world.

Before looking at these styles in detail, it is useful to assess one's own sympathies for particular styles by filling in the following questionnaire. This is intended as a way into thinking about teaching styles, not as a scientific psychological test.

Box 11.1 What Is Your Style of Language Teaching?

Tick the answer that suits your own style of language teaching best (even if it is not the one you are supposed to be using). Try to tick only *one* answer for each question: then fill them in on the grid that follows.

1. What is the chief goal of language teaching?

- (a) the students should know the rules of the language ☐
- (b) they should be able to behave in ordinary situations ☐
- (c) they should be able to communicate with other people by understanding and transmitting information ☐
- (d) they should be able to carry out a range of tasks in the L2 ☐
- (e) they should both know the rules and be able to behave and to communicate ☐
- (f) they should become better people, emotionally and socially ☐

2. Which of these teaching techniques do you value most highly?

- (a) explaining grammatical rules ☐
- (b) mechanical drills ☐
- (c) communicative tasks ☐
- (d) meaning-based goal oriented tasks ☐
- (e) presentation and practice of functions, structures, etc. ☐
- (f) discussion of controversial topics ☐

3. How would you describe the language you are teaching the students in the classroom?

- (a) rules about the language ☐
- (b) grammatical patterns ☐
- (c) language functions for communicating and solving tasks ☐
- (d) ability to carry out tasks ☐
- (e) grammatical structures and functional elements ☐
- (f) a way of unveiling the student's own personality ☐

4. Do you think the students are learning language chiefly by:

- (a) consciously understanding the language rules ☐
- (b) forming habits of using the language ☐
- (c) communicating in the classroom ☐
- (d) achieving tasks in the classroom ☐
- (e) understanding rules, forming habits and communicating ☐
- (f) engaging in activities that are personally meaningful to them ☐

Now fill in your answers on the following.

Answer	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Teaching style
(a)					academic
(b)					audiolingual
(c)					communicative
(d)					task-based learning
(e)					mainstream EFL
(f)					others

You should be able to see which of the six teaching styles you are most in tune with by looking for the row with the most ticks. Question 1 tested the overall aims of language teaching you prefer; question 2 the slant on language teaching itself that you like best; question 3 the language content used in the classroom; question 4 the ideas about language learning that you accept. Most people get a line of ticks in the same row. The final column tells you the name of your preferred teaching style, to be expanded in the following sections. (The methods outlined in this chapter are all glossed in the 'Quick Glossary of Language Teaching Methods' at the end of Chapter 1; the teaching techniques are explained in the glossary at the end of this chapter.)

11.1. The Academic Style of Teaching

Focusing Questions

- Do you think grammar explanation should ever be the focus of the lesson?
- Do you think translating texts is a useful classroom activity for the students?
- Do you see any value to using literary texts that have 'deep' meanings?

Teaching techniques: translation, texts, grammatical explanation

An advanced language lesson in an academic context often consists of a reading text taken from a newspaper or similar source, for example the lead story on the front page of today's newspaper under the headline 'PM seeks new curbs on strikes'. The teacher leads the students through the text sentence by sentence.

Box 11.2 The View of an American Teacher

I think the biggest downside in my attempt at SLA was that the method used was almost entirely the grammar-translation method. I had two different teachers over the course of six years and both spoke to the class primarily in the L1, making it easy to pick up bits of vocabulary and short phrases, but making it nearly impossible to practice any real-world use of the language. Over the years, as I've learned about the more effective methods of teaching English as a second language, I've wondered why US middle and high schools don't adopt the same methods in order to make the learning more effective.

Some of the cultural background is elucidated by the teacher, say the context of legislation about strikes in England. Words that give problems are explained or translated into the students' first language by the teacher or via the students' dictionaries—'closed shop' or 'stoppage', say. Grammatical points of interest are discussed with the students, such as the use of the passive

voice in 'A similar proposal in the Conservative election manifesto was also shelved'. The students go on to a fill-in grammatical exercise on the passive. Perhaps for homework they translate the passage into their first language.

Or take a secondary school. In one class the pupils are being tested on their homework. The teacher has written a series of sentences on the board:

The child has (cross /crossed /crossing) the road.

The boy was (help /helped /helping) his father.

and so on. Then they interact:

TEACHER: What's 'child'?

STUDENT: A noun.

TEACHER: What's 'cross'?

STUDENT: A verb.

TEACHER: What's 'crossed'?

STUDENT: Past participle.

TEACHER: So what do we say?

STUDENT: The child has crossed the road.

TEACHER: Good.

In the class next-door the pupils have a short text written on the board:

In spring the weather is fine; the flowers come out and everybody feels better that winter is over.

And then they interact:

TEACHER: What is 'spring'?

STUDENT: A noun.

TEACHER: What's 'spring' in Arabic?

STUDENT: Rabi.

TEACHER: So how do we translate 'in spring? . . .

Box 11.3 Teacher's Views: What Use, If Any, Do Teachers Make of Translation in the Classroom?

Saudi Arabia: Clarifications of words and ideas as well as defining difficult and new terminologies.

Poland: To clarify these areas which might be vague if only introduced in English. To provide exact Polish translation for new words. To communicate with absolute beginners.

Japan: We try to use classroom English more but mostly talk and explain in Japanese.

China: To clarify some difficult points. To check students' understanding.

The core aspects of these classrooms are then texts, traditional grammar and translation. Conscious understanding of grammar and awareness of the links between the first and the second language are seen as vital to learning. The academic teaching style is sometimes known as the grammar-translation method for this reason. The style is a time-honoured way of teaching foreign languages in Western culture, popular in secondary schools and widespread in the teaching of advanced students in university systems around the world. James Coleman (1996) said that, when he started teaching in an English university, he found the grammar-translation method ‘was clearly the most popular approach to language teaching in the universities’.

The academic style can involve aspects of language other than grammar. A teacher explains how to apologise in the target language—‘When you bump into someone on the street you say “sorry”’; a teacher describes where to put the tongue to make the sound /θ/ in ‘think’—both of these are slipping into an academic style where the pupils have to understand the abstract explanation before applying it to their own speech. The difference from later styles is that, in the academic style, explicit grammar itself is the main point of the lesson.

Translation is the component of the style that has had the least effect on traditional EFL teaching. For historical reasons EFL has avoided the first language, both in methodology and in the coursebooks produced in England. One reason is the use in many countries of expatriate native speaker teachers who do not know the first language of the students and so cannot translate, one of the handicaps for the native speaker teacher described in Chapter 9. The other is the prevalence within England of multilingual EFL classes where the teacher would be quite unable to use the different first languages the students speak. So the translation component of academic teaching tends to be found in countries that use locally produced materials with local teachers—the secondary school lessons mentioned above were actually observed in schools in Gaza, where foreign coursebooks and native speakers of English are in short supply. It does emerge in coursebooks occasionally as an exercise for connecting the new language to the old, as in the exercise on Response Expressions in *Outcomes* (Dellar and Walkley, 2011, p. 15) where students are asked to attempt to translate ‘Really? Congratulations,’ ‘Phew, that’s a relief’ etc and to see if there are any that cannot be translated.

The academic style does not directly teach people to use the language for some external purpose outside the classroom; translation for example is a means, not an end—few of the students are intending to become professional translators, who need highly specialised training. The academic style is ostensibly aimed primarily at the individual goal of L2 learning as an academic subject, in other words it aims to create Lang₅ linguistic competence—sheer language knowledge—in the students’ minds, rather than something to be used directly. In addition it often claims to train the students to think better, to appreciate other cultures and to gain other educational or social advantages.

But the academic style is nevertheless supposed to prepare the student for the actual use of language. By developing academic knowledge, the student eventually becomes able to use the second language in situations outside the

classroom. While the style does not directly practise language use itself, it aims to provide a basis for language use when the student requires it. Hence the undoubted popularity of grammar books such as *Basic Grammar in Use* (Murphy, 2012) among students who, despite the lack of explicit grammar in most contemporary teaching methods, continue to believe that this will help them. And indeed translation is still very much alive as a teaching technique in online apps such as *DuoLingo* (<https://www.duolingo.com/>).

The academic style sees the acquisition of linguistic competence as getting hold of traditional rules and lists of vocabulary. Its syllabus then largely consists of a list of grammatical points and vocabulary items; one of the first courses I ever taught, *Present-day English for Foreign Students* (Candlin, 1964), is organised around 'sentence patterns' such as 'John has a book' and 'new words' such as 'John Brown'. The style values what people know about the language rather than what they comprehend or produce. Students are seen as acquiring knowledge rather than communicative ability. The learner progresses from controlled conscious understanding of language to automatic processing of speech. The language teaching classroom is similar to classrooms in other school subjects, with the teacher as a fount of knowledge and advice rather than as a helper.

The academic style is appropriate for a society or an individual that treats academic knowledge of the second language as a desirable objective and that holds a traditional view of the classroom and of the teacher's role. Its strengths are to my mind the intellectual challenge it can present some students, unlike the non-intellectual approach of other styles, and the seriousness with which it views language teaching: the pupils are not just learning how to get a ticket in a railway station but how to understand important messages communicated in another language, particularly through its literature. The links to literature are valued. 'Culture' is taught as the 'high culture' of poetry and history rather than the 'low culture' of pop music and football. Though at the time I was taught Latin, I hardly appreciated this, nevertheless it has remained with me in a way that the functional French I learnt has not. One trivial example is the way that Latin quotations come to mind: Horace's line 'Caelum non animum mutant qui trans mare currunt' (those who travel across the sea change the weather not their souls), is pithier than any English quotation, as indeed shown by Christopher Marlowe's use of it in *Dr Faustus*. Or the fact that I had studied Cicero's speeches gave me a good model for appreciating Fidel Castro's devastating defence at the tribunal of those accused in the attack on the Moncada barracks in Santiago de Cuba. In other words I have certainly had my value out of learning Latin in terms of individual goals.

One weakness in the academic style is its description of language. As Halliday, McIntosh and Stevens (1964) pointed out many years ago, you cannot judge the use of grammar in the classroom as wanting if people have not used proper grammars; the question is not whether grammar is effective but *which version* of grammar is effective. The linguistic content is usually traditional grammar, rather than more recent or more comprehensive approaches

described in Chapter 2. At advanced levels, it ventures into the descriptive grammar tradition in English, for example *The COBUILD English Grammar* (Sinclair, 1990). While the treatment of vocabulary in text exercises is far-ranging, it is also unsystematic; the teacher has to cover whatever comes up in the text. Though the academic style laudably strives to build up relationships between vocabulary items encountered in texts, it has no principled way of doing so. Despite being concerned with linguistic forms, it pays little attention to components of language other than grammar and vocabulary and, occasionally, pronunciation. The same academic techniques could in fact be applied systematically to other areas, say listening comprehension or communicative function.

The academic teaching style caters for academically gifted students, who will supplement it with their own good language learner strategies, and who will probably not be young children—in other words, they are Skehan's analytic learners from Chapter 7. Those who are learning language as an academic subject—the linguistics students of the future—may be properly served by an academic style. But such academically oriented students form a small fraction of those in most educational settings—the tip of an iceberg. Those who wish to use the second language for real-life purposes may not be academically gifted or may not be prepared for the long journey from academic knowledge to practical use that the style requires.

When should the academic style be used? If the society and the students treat individual goals as primary, language use as secondary, and the students are academically gifted, then the academic style is appropriate. In a country where the students are never going to meet a French-speaking person, are never going to visit a French-speaking country, and have no career needs for French, an academic style of French teaching may be quite appropriate. But the teacher has to recognise its narrow base. To be adequate, the academic style needs to include descriptions of language that are linguistically sound and descriptions that the students can convert into actual use. The academic style would be more viable as a way of L2 teaching within its stated goals if its grammatical and vocabulary core better reflected the ways in which language is described today. Little teaching of English grammar in the academic style, for example, makes use of the basic information from Chapter 2 about grammatical morphemes or principles and parameters. If the intention is that the students are able to use language at the end, the grammar it teaches has to be justified, not only by whether it is accurate, but also by whether the students can absorb it. Stephen Krashen makes the useful point that we should be teaching 'rules of thumb' that help the student even if they are not totally true (Krashen, 1985). A quick remark by the teacher that English comparatives are formed with '-er' with monosyllabic words ('big /bigger', 'small /smaller', etc.) and with 'more' with words of more than two syllables ('intelligent / more intelligent', 'beautiful /more beautiful'), leaves the student only to puzzle out words with exactly two syllables such as 'lovely' or 'obscure'. The rule of thumb will not satisfy the linguist but it may help the students. Indeed a

celebrated computational linguist once observed to me that he didn't know how the comparative construction worked; it turned out he was quite ignorant of this EFL teacher's rule of thumb.

While the individual goals of the academic style are potentially profound, the danger is that teachers can lose sight of them and see grammatical explanations as having no other role than imparting factual knowledge about grammar. The other important goals of language awareness, mental training and the appreciation of other cultures may not be achieved if the teacher does not give them particular attention in planning lessons and in carrying them out.

Box 11.4 The Academic Style of Language Teaching

Typical teaching techniques:

- grammatical explanation, translation etc.

Goals:

- directly, individual learning of the second language as an academic subject
- indirectly, ability to use language

Type of student:

- academically gifted, older students

Learning assumptions:

- acquisition of conscious grammatical knowledge and its conversion to use

Classroom assumptions:

- formal, teacher controlled

Weaknesses from a SLA research perspective:

- inadequate use of grammar
- inefficient as a means of teaching language use

Suggestions for teaching:

- use it with academic students who have individual goals of self-development rather than international or local goals
- supplement it with other components and processes of language
- remember to develop the powerful individual goals for the students rather than be carried away by the sheer knowledge of grammar

11.2. The Audiolingual Style of Teaching

Focusing Questions

- Do you think language learning is a matter of acquiring 'habits'?
- Do you believe speech has necessarily to be taught before writing?

Teaching techniques: structure drills, dialogues, exploitation activities

Keyword

four skills: language teaching can be divided into the four skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing; in the audiolingual style, additionally, listening and reading are considered 'passive' skills, speaking and writing 'active' ones. The four-way division is useful as a rule of thumb for organising teaching but nothing more.

The name 'audiolingual' is attached to a teaching style that reached its peak in the 1960s, best conveyed in Robert Lado's thoughtful book *Language Teaching: A Scientific Approach* (Lado, 1964). Its emphasis is on teaching the spoken language through dialogues and drills. Hence it was the first style to make extensive use of technology, relying heavily on tape recordings to present spoken language and on language laboratories to promote individual speaking and listening.

A typical lesson in an audiolingual style starts with a **dialogue**, say about buying food in a shop:

A: Good morning.

B: Good morning.

A: Could I have some milk please?

B: Certainly. How much?

The language in the dialogue is controlled so that it introduces only a few new vocabulary items, 'milk', 'cola', 'mineral water', say, and includes several examples of each new structural point: 'Could I have some cola?', 'Could I have some mineral water?' etc. The students listen to the dialogue as a whole, either played back from a tape or read by the teacher; they repeat it sentence by sentence, and they act it out: 'Now get into pairs of shopkeeper and customer and try to buy the following items . . . '.

Then the students have a **structure drill** in which they practise grammatical points connected with the dialogue, such as the polite questions used in requests 'Could I . . . ?'. This is handled by having a sentence or phrase as 'input' and the same structure with vocabulary variations as the student 'output' (Cook, 1982). So the teacher presents a specimen from a tape, or written up on a whiteboard 'milk, water, cola' in less strict audiolingual classes:

INPUT: Milk.

OUTPUT: Could I have some milk?

The students now answer by constructing appropriate outputs from each input:

INPUT: Water.

OUTPUT: Could I have some water?

and so on. The drill repeatedly practises the structure with variation of vocabulary; the students hear an input and have to manipulate it in various ways to get an output, here by fitting a vocabulary item into a slot in the structural pattern. Drills developed historically into semi-realistic exchanges by linking the input and output in conversational adjacency pairs:

INPUT: What about milk?

OUTPUT: Oh yes, could I have some milk?

INPUT: And cola?

OUTPUT: Oh yes, could I have some cola?

INPUT: And you might need some mineral water.

OUTPUT: Oh yes, could I have some mineral water?

...

Essentially the same technique occurs still in *New Headway* (Soars and Soars, 2002) as a repetition exercise, 'Listen Check and Repeat':

I got up early

Are you getting up early tomorrow?

I went swimming.

Are you going to swim tomorrow?

...

Finally there are **exploitation activities** to make the students incorporate the language in their own use: 'Think what you want to buy today and ask your neighbour if you can have some.' As Wilga Rivers (1964) puts it, 'Some provision will be made for the student to apply what he has learnt in a structured communication situation.' In *Realistic English* (Abbs, Cook and Underwood, 1968), we followed up the main audiolingual dialogue with 'Things to do'. For instance after practicing a dialogue about a traffic accident, the students had to make notes about the witnesses, to imagine what the policeman would say to his wife when he gets home, and to work with a partner to devise advice to give a five-year-old on how to cross the road. Similarly a drill about 'infinitive with negative' practising 'And the woman /man /car not to meet /see / buy ... ?' leads into an activity 'Now offer each other advice about the people you should see and the cars you should buy'.

Chapter 1 mentioned the language teaching assumption that speech should take precedence over writing. The audiolingual style interprets this in two ways. One is short-term: anything the students learn must be heard before

being seen, so the teacher for example always has to say a new word aloud before writing it on the blackboard. The other is long term: the students must spend a period using only spoken skills before they are introduced to the written skills; this might last a few weeks or indeed a whole year. This long-term interpretation in my experience led to most problems. Literate adult students inevitably think of the written text as a crutch and do not know why it has been taken from them; I used to present dialogues only from tape until I caught the students writing down the text under their desks; so I decided that, if they were going to have a written text anyway, my correctly spelled version on a handout was preferable to their amateur version.

Audiolingual teaching divided language into the four skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing and grouped these into active skills which people use to produce language, such as speaking and writing, and passive skills through which they receive it, such as listening and reading. As well as speech coming before writing, passive skills should come before active skills, which leads to the ideal sequence of the four skills given in the figure: (1) listening, (2) speaking, (3) reading, (4) writing. So students should listen before they speak, speak before they read, read before they write. Needless to say, no-one now accepts that listening and reading are exactly 'passive'.

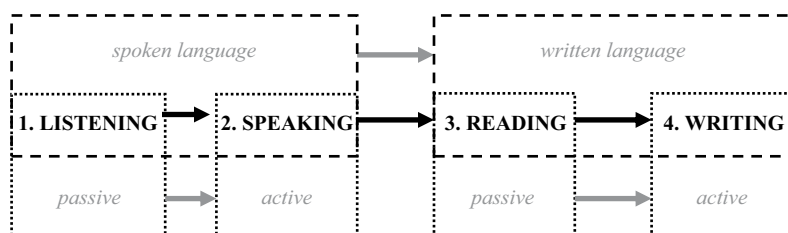


Figure 11.1 The sequence of the four skills in the audiolingual method.

Of all the styles, the audiolingual most blatantly reflects particular beliefs about L2 learning, often referred to as 'habit-formation'. Language is a set of habits, just like driving a car. A habit is learnt by doing it time and again. The dialogues concentrate on unconscious 'structures' rather than the conscious 'rules' of the academic style. Instead of trying to understand every word or structure, students learn the text more or less by heart. Learning means learning structures and vocabulary, which together add up to learning the language. Like the academic style, language is seen more as form than meaning, even if its basis is more in structural than traditional grammar. Oddly enough, despite its emphasis on the spoken language, the structures it teaches are predominantly from written language.

The goal of the audiolingual style is to get the students to 'behave' in common L2 situations, such as the station or the supermarket; it is concerned with the real-life activities the students are going to face. In one sense it is practical and communication-oriented. The audiolingual style is not about

learning language for its own sake but learning it for actual use, either within the society or without. While the appropriate student type is not defined, the style is not restricted to the academically gifted. Indeed its stress on practice can disadvantage those with an analytical bias. Nor is the audiolingual style obviously catering for students of a particular age; adults may do it as happily as children.

Its view of L2 learning is that language is doing things, not knowing things. Partly this comes across in its emphasis on the physical situation: the dialogues illustrate language used in situations such as the travel agent's or the chemist's shop. Most importance is attached to building up the strength of the student's response through practice. Little weight is given to the understanding of linguistic structure or to the creation of knowledge. The ability to use language is built up piece by piece using the same kind of learning for everything. Grammar is seen as 'structures' like 'Could I have some X?' or 'This is a Y', within which items of vocabulary are substituted. Courses and syllabuses are graded around structures; drills practise particular structures; dialogues introduce and exemplify structures and vocabulary in context. The style requires a classroom which is teacher controlled except for the final exploitation phase when, as Lado puts it, the student 'has the patterns ready as habits but he must practise using them with full attention on purposeful communication'. Until the exploitation phase of the cycle, students repeat, answer, or drill at the teacher's behest. Though they work individually in the language laboratory, all of them still use the same activities and teaching materials. The style demands students who do not expect to take the initiative. All responsibility is in the teacher's hands. The different aspects of the audiolingual method can be seen in the list made by Wilga Rivers (1964) in Box 11.5.

Box 11.5 Assumptions of Audiolingual Language Teaching

From *The Psychologist and the Foreign Language Teacher* (W.M. Rivers, 1964):

Assumption 1. Foreign Language Learning is basically a mechanical process of habit-formation.

Assumption 2. Language skills are learned more effectively if items of the foreign language are presented in spoken form before written form.

Assumption 3. Analogy provides a better foundation for foreign language learning than analysis.

Assumption 4. The meanings which the words of the language have for the native speaker can be learned only in a matrix of allusions to the culture of the people who speak that language.

Audiolingualism happened to arrive in Europe from the USA at a time when the language laboratory became technically feasible. Many of its techniques indeed worked well with this equipment; repeating sentences and hearing recordings of your repetition, doing drills and hearing the right answer after your attempt, fitted in nicely with the tape-recorder and later the language laboratory. In England at any rate audiolingualism was more something to discuss at conferences and to use in high tech institutions boasting of language laboratories than the everyday practice in the classroom; audiovisualism was probably more used in classrooms across Europe due to courses like *En Avant* (1963) and *All's Well That Starts Well* (Dickinson et al., 1975). Recent styles that emphasise free production of speech and interactive communication have found language laboratories far harder to assimilate, apart from listening activities. Indeed any glance at materials for computer assisted language learning (CALL) on the web show that they are largely audiolingual in their emphasis on drill and practice, though they necessarily depend more on the written language because of the computer's limitations in dealing with speech.

One virtue of the academic style is that, if it does not achieve its secondary goal of allowing the student to communicate, it still has default educational value via its goals of improving thinking, promoting cross-cultural understanding, and so on. The audiolingual style has no fall-back position. If it does not succeed in getting the student to function in the second language, there is nothing else to be gained from it—no academic knowledge or problem-solving ability, in short nothing educational. Lado does, however, claim that it instils a positive attitude of identification with the target culture. Its insistence on L2 learning as the creation of habits is an oversimplification of the behaviourist models of learning that were scorned as explanations for language acquisition for many years, though more in tune with recent ideas of emergentism. Many would deny that the unique elements of language are in fact learnable by these means; the ability to create or understand 'new' sentences is not acquired by practising 'old' sentences. The principles of Universal Grammar, for example, are impossible to acquire through drills and dialogues.

Syllabuses and textbooks in the audiolingual style mostly see structures, phonemes and vocabulary items as the sum total of language. Though based on the four skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing, the style pays surprisingly little attention to the distinctive features of each skill. Moreover the communication situation is far more complex than the style implies. If communication is the goal of language teaching, the content of teaching needs to be based on an analysis of communication itself, which is not adequately covered by structures and vocabulary. Even if students totally master the content of an audiolingual course, they still need much more to function in a real-life situation.

Yet many teachers fall back on the audiolingual style. One reason may be that it provides a clear framework for teachers to work within. Few other styles could be captured in four assumptions, as Wilga Rivers managed to do. Teachers always know what they are supposed to be doing, unlike more flexible or

improvisational styles. Students can relax within a firmly structured environment, always knowing the kinds of activities that will take place and what will be expected of them. After teaching a group of beginners audiolingually for six weeks, I decided it was time to have a change by introducing some communicative exercises; the students requested to go back to the safe audiolingual techniques.

Certain aspects of language may lend themselves best to audiolingual teaching. Pronunciation teaching has hardly changed its audiolingual style teaching techniques such as repetition and drill or its academic style conscious explanation in the past forty years, unlike the rapid change in other areas of teaching, perhaps because of lack of imagination by teachers, perhaps because the audiolingual style is indeed the most effective in this area. Lado's 1964 pronunciation techniques of 'demonstration, imitation, props, contrast, and practice' seem as comprehensive as anything presented in Chapter 4. The style reminds us that language is in part physical behaviour and the total language teaching operation must take this into account.

Though ostensibly out of fashion, the influence of audiolingualism is still pervasive. Few teachers nowadays employ a 'pure' audiolingual style; yet many of the ingredients are present in today's classrooms. The use of short dialogues, the emphasis on spoken language, the value attached to practice, the emphasis on the students speaking, the division into four skills, the importance of vocabulary control, the step-by-step progression, all go back to audiolingualism, or even beyond. Many teachers feel comfortable with the audiolingual style and use it at one time or another in their teaching.

Box 11.6 The Audiolingual Style of Language Teaching

Typical teaching techniques:

- dialogues, structure drills, exploitation activities

Goal:

- getting students to 'behave' in appropriate situations

Type of student:

- non-analytical, non-academic

Learning assumptions:

- 'habit-formation' behaviourist theory

Classroom assumptions:

- teacher-controlled classroom

Weaknesses from a SLA research perspective:

- inadequate form of grammar
- no position on other aspects of language knowledge or use
- inefficiency of habit-formation as a means of teaching communicative use

Suggestions for teaching:

- use for teaching certain aspects of language only
- be aware of the underlying audiolingual basis of many everyday techniques

11.3. The Communicative Style

Focusing questions

- What do you understand by ‘communication’? Do you think this is what students need?
- To what extent do you think the classroom is an educational setting of its own, to what extent simply a preparation for situations outside?

Teaching techniques: information gap, guided role-play, tasks

Keyword

functions and notions: functions are the reasons for which people use language, such as persuading and arguing, notions are the general semantic ideas they want to express, such as time and location.

In the 1970s there was a world-wide shift towards teaching methods that emphasised communication, seen as the fundamental rationale for language teaching. Indeed communicative teaching has now become the only teaching method that many teachers have experienced; it's the traditional method from the twentieth century as grammar/translation was the traditional method from the nineteenth.

The starting point for this style was redefining what the student had to learn in terms of communicative competence rather than linguistic competence, social Lang₄ rather than mental Lang₅, to use the terms introduced in

Chapter 1. The crucial goal of language teaching was seen as the ability to use the language appropriately rather than the grammatical knowledge or the 'habits' of the first two styles. The communicative behaviour of native speakers served as the basis for syllabuses that incorporated language functions, such as 'persuading someone to do something', and notions, such as 'expressing point of time', which took precedence over the grammar and vocabulary that had previously defined the syllabus. Instead of teaching the grammatical structure 'This is an X',— 'This is a book', 'This is a pen'—students were taught the communicative function of 'identifying', as in 'This is a book'. Though the sentence may end up exactly the same, the rationale for teaching it is now very different, not grammatical knowledge for its own sake but ability to use grammar for a purpose.

The elaboration of communicative competence into functions and notions affected the syllabus but did not at first have direct consequences for teaching methods. The fact that the teaching point of a lesson is the function 'asking directions' rather than the structure 'yes-no questions' does not mean it cannot be taught through any teaching style, just as grammar can be taught in almost any style. The course *Function in English* (Blundell, Higgins and Middlemiss, 1982) displayed a list of alternatives for each function categorised as neutral, informal and formal, and linked by codes to a structural index—clearly academic style. The coursebook *Outcomes* (2011) gets students to complete sentences with blanks using information from pictures and texts—a structure drill in all but name:

This is my ____, Jenny. She's 12.
This is my _____. She's 42.

To many people, however, the end dictates the means: a goal expressed in terms of communication means basing classroom teaching on communication and so leads to techniques that make the students communicate with each other rather than acquire conscious understanding of communication. Consequently communication came to be seen more as processes and interaction than static elements like functions and notions. So syllabuses started to be designed around the processes or tasks that students use in the classroom, leading to task-based learning.

Techniques of Communicative Teaching

The archetypal communicative technique is an **information gap exercise**. An exercise in *Outcomes* (Dellar and Walkley, 2011, p. 88) for instance gets two students to look at different sets of drawings of food and then to draw the items without seeing their partner's set. *Living with People* (Cook, 1983) used pairs of photographs of Oxford street scenes with slight differences—a butcher's shop taken from two different angles, a queue at a bus-stop taken a few seconds apart, and so on. Students look at one or the other set of photos and have to

discover what the differences are, if any, by talking to each other without looking at the other set. This information gap technique originated with language expansion exercises for native English primary school children in the 1970s, in courses such as *Concept 7–9* (Wight, 1972), but it soon became a mainstay of EFL teaching. It might use visuals, tapes or models—in fact anything where the teacher could deliberately engineer two sets of slightly differing information so that the students had an information gap to bridge. The point of the activity is that the students have to improvise the dialogue themselves to solve their communicative task. They have to use their own resources to achieve a communicative goal with other people, thus bringing communication directly into the classroom. This is very much Halliday's ideational function of language in which pure data is transferred from one mind to another.

The second standard communicative technique is **guided role-play**. The students improvise conversations around an issue without the same contrived information gap. *Outcomes* (Dellar and Walkley, 2011) for example asks students to buy or seek travel tickets in pairs exchanging the appropriate information. The aim is practicing how to assume particular roles in situations. The situations themselves are virtually the same as those in the audiolingual method—the doctor's, the station, the restaurant—but, instead of starting from the highly controlled pre-set dialogues of the audiolingual method, students try to satisfy communicative needs by talking for themselves; it isn't the language of the station that's important, it's what you do with it—buying a ticket, asking for the time of a train, etc. One caveat should be made: some educational systems feel it is undesirable for students to act out roles that most of them would never have in real life, say the ticket sellers in the exercise above and doctors in doctor/patient situations. And of course such roles change with time; a Dublin teacher told me she had spent her life teaching role-plays in which the customer is foreign, the waiter native, only to realise that in Dublin today most of the waiters are non-native speakers of English, not the customers.

The third general technique is **tasks**: students carry out tasks in the classroom with a definite outcome. For instance in Lesson 14 of *Atlas 1* (Nunan, 1995), students go through a linked series of tasks on 'giving reasons', called a 'task chain'. First they listen to a taped conversation and have to tick how many times they hear 'why' and 'because'; then they listen again to find out specific reasons; in pairs they compare their answers and, after the teacher has given a 'model' conversation, they role-play equivalent conversations about 'asking for things and giving reasons'. Finally they discuss in groups whether it is appropriate to ask other people to do things like 'buy you a drink' in their own cultures. Students are working together to achieve the task and to share their conclusions with other students: the picture that accompanies this task chain is two smiling students talking to each other, highlighting the classroom-internal nature of the task.

In one sense these three techniques cover the same ground. The information gap game merges with the role-play when the person playing the

ticket-collector has information the other students do not; the task becomes a role-play when they practise fictional requests.

The communicative classroom is a very different place from classrooms using the other two styles encountered so far. The teacher no longer dominates it, controlling and guiding the students every minute. Rather he or she takes one step back and hands the responsibility for the activities over to the students, forcing them to make up their own conversations in pairs and groups—learning language by doing. A key difference from other styles is that the students are not required to produce speech with the minimum of mistakes in native terms. Instead they can use whatever forms and strategies they can devise themselves to solve their communication problem, producing sentences that may be entirely appropriate to their task but are often highly deviant from a native perspective. The teacher stands by. While the teacher provides some feedback and correction, this plays a much less central part in his or her classroom duties. The teacher has the role of equal and helper rather than the wise expert of the academic style or the martinet of the audiolingual.

This jump from the traditional teacher-led class disconcerts or indeed alienates those from cultures who see education differently. The adoption of the communicative style in a particular place always has to recognise this potential cultural obstacle, however ideal communicative language teaching may be on other grounds. Here is a conversation taking place at a parents' evening featuring an Inuk parent and a non-Inuit teacher (Crago, 1992):

TEACHER: Your son is talking well in class. He is speaking up a lot.

INUK PARENT: I am very sorry.

To the teacher, it is obvious that it is a virtue to speak and contribute in class; to the parent, it is equally obvious that children show proper respect for the teacher by staying silent in class. A communicative style with its emphasis on spontaneous production by the learners is unlikely to go down well in cultures that value silence and respect.

Learning in Communicative Language Teaching

In general, there is surprisingly little connection between the communicative style and SLA research. Its nearest relations are functional theories of how children acquire the first language like Bruner (1983), rather than models of L2 learning. It assumes little about the learning process, apart from claiming that, if the right circumstances are provided to them, something will happen inside the students' minds.

Historically the communicative style relates to the idea of interlanguage described in Chapter 1. Teachers should respect the developing language systems of the students rather than see them as defective. Indeed the major impact of SLA research on language teaching so far may have been the independent language assumption described in Chapter 1, which liberates the teacher from

contrived grammatical progressions and allows them to desist from correcting all the student's mistakes: learners need the freedom to construct language for themselves, even if this means making 'mistakes'. So the favoured techniques change the teacher's role to that of organiser and provider rather than director and controller. The teacher sets up the task or the information gap exercise and then lets the students get on with it, providing help but not control. The students do not have to produce near-native sentences; it no longer matters if something the student says differs from what natives might say.

One strand in this thinking comes from ideas of Universal Grammar, seen in Chapter 10. If the students are using the natural processes of learning built into their minds, the teacher can step back and let them get on with it by providing activities and language examples to get these natural processes going. Sometimes this is seen as hypothesis-testing, an early version of the Universal Grammar theory. In this the learner makes a guess at the rules of the language, tries it out by producing sentences, and accepts or revises the rules in the light of the feedback that is provided. However, hypothesis-testing in this sense is no longer part of UG theory as it requires more correction than L1 children get from their parents, or indeed most students from teachers in communicative classrooms.

In a way this style has a *laissez-faire* attitude: learning takes place in the students' minds in ways that teachers cannot control; the students should be trusted to get on with it without interference. It can lead to the dangerous assumption that any activity is justified that gives students the opportunity to test out 'hypotheses' in the classroom, with no criteria applied other than getting the students talking. However enjoyable the class may be, however much language is provoked from the students, the teacher always has to question whether the time is being well spent; are the students learning as much from the activity as they would from doing something else?

Language learning in this style is the same as language using. Information gap exercises and role-play techniques imitate what happens in the world outside the classroom in a controlled form, rather than being special activities peculiar to language learning. Later on students will be asking the way or dealing with officials in a foreign language environment just as they are pretending to do in the classroom. Learning language means practising communication within the four walls of the classroom. You learn to talk to people by actually talking to them: L2 learning arises from meaningful use in the classroom.

The communicative style does not hold a view about L2 learning as such but maintains it happens automatically, provided the student interacts with other people in the proper way. Many of its techniques carry on the audiolingual style's preoccupations with active practice and with spoken language. Communicative tasks expand on the exploitation phase of the audiolingual style, in which the students use the language actively for themselves; they have now been developed into a style of their own, TBL, as seen below. This exploitation phase was regarded as essential by all the commentators on audiolingualism, whether Lado or Rivers. It consisted of 'purposeful communication' (Lado,

1964) such as role-playing, and games—precisely the core activities of the communicative style. The main difference is that in communicative teaching there is no previous phase in which the students are learning dialogues and drills in a highly controlled fashion. A common complaint against communicative language teaching is that it neglects pump-priming: to get water from a well you may need to put water in to make the pump operate. The communicative style assumes that language is somehow already there to be used in its activities, i.e. it is a continuation of the exploitation phase of audiolingual teaching without the basic teaching that used to precede it.

Like the audiolingual style, communicative teaching often resembles behaviourist views of learning. I have sometimes introduced the ideas of ‘mands’ and ‘tacts’ to teachers without telling them they are verbal operants within Skinner’s behaviourist model outlined in Chapter 10. Their reaction has been that they sound like a useful basis for a communicative syllabus. The main difference between the audiolingual style and the communicative style is the latter’s emphasis on spontaneous production and comprehension.

The style is potentially limited to certain types of student. For instance, it might benefit field-independent students rather than field-dependent students, extroverts rather than introverts, and less academic students rather than academic students. Its cultural implications can also go against students’ expectations of the classroom more than other styles; students in some countries have indeed been upset by its apparent rejection of the ways of learning current in their culture in favour of what they regard as a ‘Western’ view (though there seems no reason to think of the academic or audiolingual styles as intrinsically any more or less Western than the communicative—all come from educational traditions in the West). The audiolingual style with its authoritarian teacher controlling every move the students make fits more with cultures that are ‘collectivist’, to use Hofstede’s term (Hofstede, 1980), say in Japan; the communicative style with the teacher setting up and organising activities goes more with cultures that are ‘individualistic’, say in Australia.

The communicative teaching style covers only some of the relevant aspects of L2 learning, however desirable they may be in themselves. For example it has no techniques of its own for teaching pronunciation or vocabulary, little connection with speech processing or memory, and little recognition of the possibilities available to the learner through their first language. Pairwork and groupwork among students with the same first language, for example, often lead to codeswitching between the first and the second language, perhaps something to be developed systematically rather than seen as undesirable. In so far as the style uses grammar, it often relies on a structuralist grammar reminiscent of audiolingualism, for instance, in the substitution tables found in many communicative coursebooks, to be discussed below.

In general, communicative language teaching has sophisticated ideas of what students need to learn, which have undoubtedly freed the classroom from the rigours of the academic and audiolingual styles. It is, however, hard to pin it down in a set of axioms in the way that Wilga Rivers could do for

audiolingual teaching. The best attempt to giving the basic tenets of communicative language teaching was by Keith Morrow (1981):

- 1 Know what you are doing.
- 2 The whole is more than the sum of the parts.
- 3 The processes are as important as the forms.
- 4 To learn it do it.
- 5 Mistakes are not always a mistake.

These clearly do not have the straightforward practicality of the audiolingual assumptions and would apply to many teaching methods rather than being exclusive to communicative teaching. The basic question of what we do in the classroom next Monday at 11.15 is seldom answered by the generalities of the communicative style. However interesting the techniques we have mentioned may be, there are rather few of them compared to the vast range available in earlier styles. Teachers sometime feel lost because they have not been told exactly what to do but simply given some overall guidance and a handful of techniques, and told to get on with it. Their preparation time also goes up as they have to devise roles for the students to play, collect pictures for information gap games, or invent ingenious tasks for them to do.

It is possible to have different emphases within the overall communicative style. A conversation requires someone to talk to (social), something to talk about (information), and a reason for talking (task). As the pioneer linguist Ferdinand de Saussure (1916) said, 'Speech has both an individual and a social side and we cannot conceive of one without the other'; Lang₄ is bound to Lang₅. The joint functioning of two people in a situation is what Halliday and Matthiesen (2013) term the *interpersonal* meta-function of language. Hence some people stress the exchange of information, of ideas and meanings, rather than the relationships between people, Halliday's *ideational* meta-function of language.

Those who put more weight on social communication see language as interaction between people, rather than as texts or grammatical rules or patterns: it has a social purpose. Language is for forming relationships with people and for interrelating with them. Using language means meeting people and talking to them. The aim is to give the students the ability to engage in conversations with people. The teaching syllabus is primarily a way of listing the aspects of communication the students will find most useful, whether functions, notions or processes. It isn't so much the ideas that people exchange that matter as the bonds they build up between them.

So this emphasises the international use of the second language with people in another country rather than local goals in multilingual societies, very much the goal of the plurilingualism praised by the Common European Framework (2008). The overall goals of the communicative style have not been specified in great detail in general purpose language teaching, which usually tries for the generalised situation of visitors to the target country with the accent

on tourism and travel, without specific goals for careers, for education, or for access to information. In more specialised circumstances, social communication has been taught for specific careers—doctors, businessmen, oil technicians, or whatever—and for higher education.

In practice many communicative coursebooks adopt what might be called ‘holiday communication’ centred upon tourist activities, with the book resembling a glossy holiday brochure and the teacher a jolly package-tour rep organising fun activities. One entertaining, if light-hearted, method of evaluating courses is to measure the ‘smile factor’: the average number of smiling faces per page of the textbook, which gives a quick insight into the attitudes being expressed. The higher the smile factor, the closer to ‘package holiday communication’. For instance *Speakout* (Eales and Oakes, 2012) has a smile factor of 38 smiling faces in the first 20 pages; *English Unlimited* (Doff, 2010) a record 58—the English-speaking world is presented as a happy friendly place. The other genres of printed English where such smiling faces abound are travel brochures and clothes catalogues: the *Landsend Overstocks* mail-order catalogue for example has 18 on 4 pages. Whether you consider smiling faces an advantage or not depends on whether you think this makes English a happy interesting subject or makes the coursebook a trivialisation of human existence. When I once commented on this to a publisher, he said that I had missed the point: coursebooks were supposed to be fantasy, not grim reality.

The other approach to communicative teaching is to emphasise the information that is transferred rather than the social interaction between the participants, resembling Halliday’s ideational function. A typical technique forms the core of James Asher’s Total Physical Response (TPR) method, i.e. acting out commands. For example in *Live Action English* (Seely and Romijn, 1995) an activity called ‘sharpening your pencil’ gets students to carry out a series of commands ‘Pick up your pencil’, ‘Look at the point . . .’ There is no real-life social role involved; the point is understanding the information. TPR students are listening in order to discover what actions to carry out; their social interaction with the teacher is unlike that found in any normal language exchange, except for the army drill square. Communicative teaching for information sees listening as the crucial key to extracting information from what you hear.

The overall goal is to get students to use the language, first by comprehending, then by producing. Comprehension of information is not, however, a goal in its own right, but a way into fuller command of the language in use. Mostly the goal is non-specific, whether local or international, playing down the individual goals of language teaching and making few claims to general educational values. In terms of classrooms, communicative language teaching is, for good or for ill, much more teacher-dominated than the other communicative variants. The teacher supplies, in person or through materials, the language input and the organisation of the students’ activities and classroom strategies. The social communicative style is limited by physical factors in the classroom in that it becomes progressively more difficult to organise its activities the larger the group. The listening-based information communicative

style lends itself to classes of any size and so is more compatible with the traditional teacher-dominated classroom. It also caters for a range of student types, provided they do not mind having to listen rather than speak in the classroom. Again, the students need to be prepared for what the style is trying to do, since it differs from their probable expectations of the classroom.

Finally, it implies that there is information to communicate. An important factor in the style is the choice of information. Many courses rely on 'imaginary' content (Cook, 1983), such as the What's On page in *English Unlimited* (Doff, 2010) featuring imaginary cafés and clubs. In a survey I found that this type of content figured on 9 pages out of 10 in beginners courses, 7 out of 10 in intermediate. But it is also possible to have 'real' content based on actual information about the 'real' world: the Scandinavian department store Stockmann (*Outcomes*), the Hard Rock Café in London (*speakout*), the life of Calamity Jane (*Just Right*) or methods for brewing coffee (*Meeting People*). My own feeling is that imaginary content trivialises language learning; it conveys the message that you do not gain anything significant from your language class apart from the ability to use the language and can become just another form of language practice. 'Real' content makes the language lesson have a point; the students have acquired something through the language they would not otherwise have known.

Different types of real information that might be conveyed include:

- *another academic subject taught through English*. I have recommended students in England who complained they were stuck at a developmental plateau to go to dance classes rather than English classes.
- *student-contributed content*. Getting the students to talk about their own lives and real interests, fascinating in a multilingual class, boring in one where everybody has known each other since primary school. In the first English class I ever taught a class discussion brought out how the headman in a student's Vietnamese village had been hanged in front of the student's very eyes. *People and Places* (Cook, 1980) used a cumulative personal information section at the end of the book which the student filled in lesson by lesson as they supplied different aspects of information about themselves.
- *language*. That is to say, information about the language they are studying. After all the one thing that all the students are guaranteed to have in common is they are learning a language. *Meeting People* (Cook, 1982) for instance had a text about the varieties of English spoken in different parts of the world. This is not an excuse for formal grammar teaching but for discussion of aspects of language people are interested in.
- *literature*. For many years literature was despised because of its inappropriate language and its links to the academic method. It is, however, capable of bringing depth of emotion and art to the classroom that materials written by course-writers can never do. *Living with People* (Cook, 1982) used two short poems by the controversial psychotherapist R.D. Laing to get students discussing their feelings.

- *culture*. That is to say, discussing the cultural differences between languages, one of the goals of the UK National Curriculum. Are English people aware of showing a polite back—i.e. not obstructing people's view in a stadium—as Japanese are? Are students aware of the crucial concept of queuing in English life, such as the virtual queue of people ordering drinks at a bar?
- *'interesting facts'*. These consist of any topic that might interest the student and are not necessarily connected to English. After the lesson the students can say they learnt something: how to treat a nosebleed, how to use chopsticks, how to play cards, how to make coffee, to take examples from *Meeting People* (Cook, 1982).

There is no logical reason why communicative teaching should rely on listening at the expense of speaking; communication requires a speaker as well as a listener. There has often been a geographical division in the communicative style: 'British-influenced' teaching has emphasised that students have to both listen and speak from day one of the course. 'American-influenced', or perhaps more strictly 'Krashen-influenced', teaching has emphasised listening without speaking. As a consequence, 'British' teaching has concentrated more on the interpersonal function; the double role of listener and speaker immediately calls up interactive 'conversation' while the listener-only role resembles people listening to the radio.

The idea of learning 'real' content in another language has led the approach called CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning), which has been extensively promoted in Europe. In this students learn both a new language and new content at the same time. CLIL differs from content-based instruction by insisting that both language and content are equally important. Coyle, Hood and Marsh (2010) say that content is not tied down to conventional academic subjects but might include 'the Olympic Games, global warming and ecosystems . . . climate change, carbon footprint or the Internet . . . health in the community, water or genocide, . . . race, global communication or learning across continents'. A similar range of topics is found on the British Council/BBC website *TeachingEnglish* (<https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/clil>): Healthy Living, the Causes of the Second World War, Basic Numeracy, Recycling, and Dali. For Healthy Living, for example, primary school pupils in groups brainstorm positive and negative aspects of a healthy lifestyle and then fill-in a questionnaire asking how often they 'relax', 'have arguments' etc. With the exception of Basic Numeracy, the topics belong to a neutral selection of modern themes that can be taught by teachers without qualifications in the subject discipline they belong to, little different from the range in any modern EFL coursebook—in other words more like popular journalism than education.

In the UK the Bullock Report (1975) became famous for advocating 'language across the curriculum', stressing the role that the English language could play in other school subjects. However the approach ran aground on

the threat that subject teachers felt of their territory being taken over by their language teaching colleagues without specialist knowledge. Hence the teaching tended to cover 'interesting facts' rather than the main elements in the national curriculum. CLIL may well encounter the same problems, as soon as it tries to go beyond interesting facts like those on the lists above. Take the experiment reported in Yamano (2013) in which Japanese students were taught about 'animals', aiming to teach the 'target language vocabulary' (colours, names etc) and 'communicating in English' (interrogative questions) by CLIL and Traditional PPP. The CLIL class made animals out of coloured clay and made a class zoo to fit the animals' habitats and then discussed ways of saving endangered species. It certainly sounds fun, and was appreciated by the students, but it doesn't mention how the academic content was developed with biology teachers rather than being simply a variation of the fashionably interesting topic of the environment.

In general the communicative style is appropriate for students and societies that value international goals of a non-specific kind. The teacher using it with a particular class has to remember that it will not appeal to students with other types of goal, say an interest in language structure or a desire for personal liberation. The unexpectedness of the classroom situation it relies on may need selling to the students; they have to realise that the onus is on them to take advantage of the classroom, not on the teacher to spoon-feed them. It needs balancing with other styles to ensure that the coverage of language components is adequate even to achieve its own goal of communicative competence, for example in the teaching of pronunciation. But at least it sees communication as a dynamic social activity to be acquired through active participation by the students, marking a clear break in this respect from the academic and audiolingual styles.

One seldom-discussed danger has been the academic standing of language teaching as a discipline. The academic style of teaching was to some extent educationally respectable because it stressed intellectual understanding of the language system, studied high art in the form of literature, and used translation as a teaching technique, clearly a unique and demanding skill. First audiolingualism, then communicative language teaching, said teaching should be based on everyday use of language. When describing the setting up of the language centre at the University of Essex in the 1960s, David Stern (1964) claimed that it would concentrate on 'learning as a practical skill as distinguished from an academic discipline dependent on the command of the language'. Both at school level and at university level this view resulted in teachers from other disciplines failing to take language teaching seriously. In schools some felt that it should no longer be part of the core academic curriculum but an optional extra, like keyboard skills, because it no longer contributed to the core educational values of the school. At universities in England, if not elsewhere, this has led to a down-valuing in terms of esteem. The consequences of Stern's plan is that an Essex professor announced thirty years later that language teaching is only about teaching people to order coffee in a bar

in Paris. This is one reason why I have been arguing for the deeper value of language teaching throughout this book. L2 users are different from those who speak one language, not just people who can order a coffee or read a map in another language. L2 teaching is about turning learners into these distinctive types of people—L2 users.

Box 11.7 The Communicative Style of Language Teaching

Typical teaching techniques:

- information gap, role-plays, tasks

Goals:

- getting students to interact with other people in the second language, in the classroom and outside

Type of student:

- field-independent students rather than field-dependent students, extroverts rather than introverts, and less academic students rather than academic students

Learning assumptions:

- learning by communicating with other students in the classroom: *laissez-faire*
- some use of conscious understanding of grammar

Classroom assumptions:

- teacher as organiser, not source of language knowledge

Weaknesses from a SLA research perspective:

- lack of views on discourse processes, communication strategies, etc.
- black-box model of learning
- lack of role for the first language

Suggestions for teaching:

- use with appropriate students in appropriate circumstances
- supplement with other components of language
- avoid trivialization of content and aims

11.4. The Task-Based Learning Style of Teaching

Focusing Questions

- What is the ideal way of organising what students do in the classroom?
- What relationship does what happens in the classroom have to the world outside the classroom?

Teaching Techniques: tasks

In the past few years the most fashionable style among teaching methodologists has been task-based learning (TBL). In the everyday sense of the word 'task', all language teaching consists of tasks, whether these are translation tasks, structure drill tasks or information gap tasks: a teacher's job is to set up things for the students to do in the classroom, i.e. give them tasks to carry out. But TBL uses 'task' in a narrower way, as seen in the definition by Martin Bygate, Skehan and Swain (2001): 'A task is an activity which requires learners to use language, with emphasis on meaning, to attain a goal'. This definition illustrates some of the main points of TBL that most of its enthusiasts are agreed about—interaction, meaning and measurable goal. Of course, as with any teaching exercise, the task the teacher plans may be very different from what the students actually do (Hosenfeld, 1976; Seedhouse, 2005).

According to the definition, a task 'requires learners to use language': students are learning the language by using it, taken over from the communicative style. This implies that learning is the same as processing, reminiscent of Krashen's thinking. While the communicative style organises its tasks and activities around a language point—teaching a function, a communicative strategy and so on—TBL denies this: the language must come from the learners themselves, not from the teacher. It is solving the requirements of the task itself that counts. So a task is chosen because it's a good task, not because it teaches a particular language point. Suppose we design a class task 'Make a shopping list for your weekly internet order from a supermarket'. This task requires the students to work together and to report back; but it does not tell them how to interact to achieve this nor does it supply the vocabulary.

The second part of the definition is that a task has 'an emphasis on meaning'. The teaching focus is not on the structures, language functions, vocabulary items etc of earlier approaches but on the meaning of what is said. Hence structure drills count as exercises, not as tasks, since they do not involve meaning. Meaning in TBL is one person conveying information appropriate to the particular task to another person. There is no necessary requirement for the information to be meaningful in any other way, say by emotionally involving the student, or for it to be useful in the world outside the classroom: meaning relates only to the task at hand. It is meaning in a pure information sense, rather like the digits of computer data. As Garcia Mayo (2007, p. 91) puts it, TBL is 'a computational model of acquisition in which tasks are viewed as devices which can influence learners' information processing'. So the focus in

the shopping list task is entirely on the content of the list, the information to be transmitted to the supermarket. It is irrelevant whether the students have ever done or will do online shopping orders.

The last part of the definition requires the student 'to use language . . . to attain a goal'. The point of the task is not to master a specific language point but to achieve a particular non-language goal. There has to be an outcome to the task which the students do or do not achieve. Again this distinguishes tasks from other forms of teaching activities, where a task ends essentially when the teacher says so. The goal of the shopping list task is the shopping list itself; have they succeeded in making a list that will cater for a week's shopping needs?

TBL draws on an eclectic range of sources for its support. It is related to the Interaction Model in Chapter 10 in that it depends on negotiation of meaning, and to the Socio-cultural Model in that it depends upon peer-to-peer scaffolding. It is also related to the various views of processing, in particular to views on the centrality of meaning in processing. Its main support is classroom-based research studies that show in general that TBL does lead to an improvement in fluency and accuracy. However this is not the same thing as proving that TBL leads to acquisition and to use outside the classroom.

FonF and Task-Based Learning

A central component of TBL for many people is the idea of FonF mentioned in Chapter 2—discussion of formal aspects of language following non-language-based practice. While the use of tasks itself is in the direct line of descent from the exploitation phase of audiolingualism via communicative language teaching, FonF is the distinctive ingredient of the TBL style. In this view, it is beneficial to focus on language form, provided this emerges out of a task rather than being its starting point or sole rationale. To some extent this modifies the basic TBL tenet that language itself is not the focus of the task by letting language form in through the back door.

Though explanation of forms has been extensively discussed as part of FonF, there are comparatively few examples of what it means in practice. Dave and Jane Willis (2007) give the example of a task based on a text about a suicide attempt. They suggest the teacher can exploit this to show the various uses of the reflexive pronoun in the text, such as 'Jim Burney himself' and 'kill himself' and to introduce other uses such as 'help yourself'. This is an informal, common-sense view of grammar based on some frequent uses of reflexives. Since the tasks have not been designed with language in mind, such follow-up activities are necessarily ad hoc and unsystematic (unless of course the teacher cheats and works a language point into the design of the task).

The FonF idea thus abandons one aspect of audiolingualism that had still been implicitly accepted by communicative teaching, namely Rivers' assumption (3) 'Analogy provides a better foundation for foreign language learning than analysis'. The FonF approach harks back to earlier models of language teaching, which also saw explicit grammar as a follow-up activity. FonF is

foreshadowed for example in Article 4 of the International Phonetics Association manifesto of the 1880s: 'In the early stages grammar should be taught inductively, complementing and generalising language facts observed during reading'. It resembles the traditional teaching exercise known as 'explication de textes', which was an integral part of the grammar-translation methodology for teaching French—and is still apparently encountered by British university students on their year abroad. In this the teacher goes through a written text to draw out and discuss useful vocabulary and grammar on an ad hoc basis. The difference is that in FonF there is a task to be carried out—and the explication takes place in the second language after the event rather than as it happens. But the underlying question remains, not *whether* grammar should be explained, but *what* grammar should be explained, out of say the alternatives presented in Chapter 2.

The Nature of Tasks

The original impetus for task-based learning came from the celebrated Bangalore Project (Prabhu, 1987), which reacted both against the traditional form of EFL used in India and against the type of situational teaching then practised. The main grounds were the refusal to recognise the classroom as a 'real' situation in its own right rather than as a 'pretend' L2 situation. A real classroom uses activities that are proper for classrooms, i.e. educational tasks. If learning is doing tasks, teaching means specifying and helping with the tasks, e.g. 'making the plan of a house'. The tasks are not defined linguistically but in an order based on difficulty.

The whole-class activity consisted of a pedagogic dialogue in which the teacher's questions were, as in other classrooms, invitations to learners to demonstrate their ability, not pretended requests for enlightenment, and learners' responses arose from their role as learners, not from assumed roles in simulated situations or from their individual lives outside the classroom.

(Prabhu, 1987, p. 28)

Educational value depends on the validity of the tasks and their usefulness as vehicles for language learning.

Hence teaching started to recognise the importance of the classroom itself as a communicative educational setting in its own right and to organise the activities that occurred there in terms of educational tasks rather than tasks that necessarily relate to the world outside the classroom. Prabhu's original list of tasks categorised them as:

information-gap activities such as the picture comparison described above, *reasoning-gap activities* deriving new information by inference, such as working out timetables for the class, and

opinion-gap activities in which there is no right or wrong answer, only the person's preference, as in 'the discussion of a social issue'.

Jane Willis (1996) on the other hand lists six main type of tasks: *listing, ordering and sorting, comparing, problem-solving, sharing personal experience and creative*. In *Atlas 1* (Nunan, 1995, teacher's book) there are ten types of task including *predicting* (for instance 'predicting what is to come on the learning process'), *conversational patterns* ('using expressions to start conversations and keep them going') and *cooperating* ('sharing ideas and learning with other students'). The concept of the task does then vary considerably: it seems a peg that you can hang many coats on.

Jane Willis (1996) has provided a useful outline of the flow in task-based learning, seen below, which has three main components—pre-task, task cycle and language focus:

Box 11.8 The Flow in Task-Based Learning (Jane Willis, 1996)

The pre-task: the teacher sets up the task.

1. The task cycle

- A. **task.** The students carry out the task in pairs with the teacher monitoring.
- B. **planning.** The students decide how to report back to the whole group.
- C. **report.** The students make their reports.

2. Language focus

- A. **analysis.** Students discuss how others carried out the task on a recording.
- B. **practice.** The teacher practises new language that has cropped up.

This may, however, be a good teaching sequence in any style. In an academic style for example the teacher might present an advertisement for translation (pre-task) and set the students the specific task of translating parts of it in pairs (task). They decide how to present it to the group (planning), then compare notes on it with other groups (report), possibly by using networked word-processing. Then the students compare their advertisement with real advertisements (analysis) and they practise new language that has come up (practice). Task-based learning develops communicative language teaching by providing a much greater range of classroom activities and much firmer overall guidance for the teacher.

Issues with TBL

The goals for task-based learning that are usually mentioned are fluency, accuracy and complexity (Skehan, 1998). But people need to be fluent, accurate or complex because they need a second language for buying and selling, for translating poetry, for passing an exam, for listening to operas, for travelling, for praying, for writing a novel, for organising a revolution, or any of the other myriad reasons for which people learn second languages. Task-based learning concentrates on what can work in the classroom. Its expressed goal is short-term fluency. It does not appear concerned with overall teaching goals, which are hardly ever mentioned. Presumably there are higher goals to language teaching than fluency, accuracy and complexity, such as the beneficial effects on the students of the second language (personal goals), the usefulness of knowing a second language for the society (local goals) and the benefits for the world in general (international goals), as in Chapter 9. Though classroom tasks may well lead to all of these outcomes, this is unlikely to work if they are not explicitly included in the design and implementation.

Nor does TBL require that tasks should mirror what the students have to do in the world outside the classroom. Sometimes it is briefly mentioned that it would be nice if classroom tasks had some relationship to later L2 uses—‘I regard this as desirable but difficult to obtain in practice’ (Skehan, 1998, p. 96). External relevance is an optional extra for task-based learning rather than a vital ingredient as it would be for most other language teaching. Nor have internal goals been mentioned, say the beneficial educational effects of learning through tasks on, say, the students’ interactional abilities or their cognitive processes.

The information that is conveyed in tasks and the outcomes of the tasks seem essentially trivial; there is no reason why they should matter to anybody. Take the list of specimen tasks given in Ellis (2003):

- completing one another’s family tree
- agreeing on advice to give to the writer of a letter to an agony aunt
- discovering whether one’s paths will cross in the next week
- solving a riddle
- leaving a message on someone’s answer machine

These tasks would be fascinating to ten-year-olds, reminding us that information gap activities indeed originated in primary schools. The old-fashioned justification for these topics was the language that they covered, a defence no longer available for TBL since it does not teach specific language points.

The question of the relevance and power of the native speaker model, so eagerly debated by much contemporary SLA research as seen in Chapter 9, has passed TBL by. It does not seem to care what the long-term purpose may be provided it gets short-term gains on performance on tasks. It does not see the classroom as an L2 user situation but follows the traditional line of minimising

the use of the first language. The students are seen as belonging to the learner group rather than as potential or actual members of L2 user groups. For example Willis and Willis (2007) devote a handful of pages to saying how teacher can help the students to get over the 'hurdle' of using the language, i.e. the first language is seen as a hindrance rather than a help. The reasons for using the second language for any of these classroom-centred tasks seem entirely arbitrary: what's the motive for making a shopping list, discussing suicide, or completing your family tree *in a second language*? The students could carry out the tasks far better in the first language: why use the second? In other words, despite its protestations, TBL is essentially language practice since it provides no motive for the task to be in another language.

The sword that hangs over both the communicative and TBL styles is the question of where the language that the students need for the task comes from in the first place. As exploitation techniques, tasks require the students to draw on their own language resources to carry them out but do not provide the resources to do so. The task of completing a family tree requires at least the vocabulary of relatives—'mother', 'husband', 'aunt', 'cousin' and so on. Many coursebooks use a tree to teach or revise the words for relatives. *Touchstone* (McCarthy, McCarten and Sandiford, 2005) shows an illustrated tree going from grandparents down to children; students practise by stating the various relationships of the people to each other; later they fill out two trees in their 'vocabulary notebook'. All straightforward standard teaching. Indeed family tree exercises can also be found in *Move*, *New Headway* and *New Cutting Edge*—all of course showing a British middle-class view of the nuclear family rather than extended family networks of other classes or cultures. But how can the students make a family tree if they have not first had the vocabulary taught to them: 'father', 'aunt', 'cousin'? In first language acquisition research, this is called 'bootstrapping'—how the child works out the language by pulling itself up with its own boots. TBL must presuppose bootstrapping of the language necessary to the task—the students have to have learnt the vocabulary and structures before they can actually do the task. If this has already been taught in say Jane Willis's 'pre-task' stage, this represents the true teaching stage, not the task itself.

So TBL is not concerned with the overall goals or purposes of language teaching, only with short-term fluency gains. Hence it does not have a syllabus for teaching so much as a list of tasks carefully designed and selected to work with the students at a particular stage. It does not cover many areas of language proficiency such as pronunciation. The teacher's role is even more to be an organiser and helper than an expert, since they do not need particular knowledge of anything but task design and the minimal grammar necessary for FonF. The students must be prepared for this type of communal learning through tasks and convinced that it is a proper way of acquiring the language and that the teacher knows what they are doing. This approach will not go down well with highly academic students or in some cultural situations. Students have been concerned when they first encounter this form of teaching where the language content is invisible and not supplied by the teacher since it is even further from their expectations than the communicative style.

The overall difficulty with the TBL style is then its detachment from everything else in language use and in language teaching: it is a single solution approach that tackles the whole of language teaching in the same way. Its tasks are highly useful exploitation activities and important for teachers to know about and to use with other techniques. But they cannot realistically form the core of any language teaching classroom that sees its students as people engaged with the world.

Box 11.9 The Task-Based Learning Style of Teaching

Typical teaching techniques:

- meaning-based tasks with definite outcomes

Goals:

- fluency, accuracy, complexity

Type of student:

- possibly less academic

Learning assumptions:

- language acquisition takes place through meaning-based tasks with a specific short-term goal

Classroom assumptions:

- teaching depends on organising tasks based on meaning with specific outcomes

Weaknesses from a SLA research perspective:

- lack of wider engagement with goals, learner groups etc
- lack of a role for first language
- reliance on a processing model as opposed to a learning model

Suggestions for teaching:

- use in conjunction with other styles not as a style on its own
- useful as a way of planning and preparing lessons

11.5. The Mainstream EFL Style of Language Teaching

Focusing Questions

- What does the word ‘situation’ mean to you in language teaching?
- How much do you think a teacher can mix different teaching styles?

Teaching techniques: substitution table, situation teaching

The mainstream style of teaching developed in British-influenced EFL from the 1930s up to the present day. Till the early 1970s, it mostly reflected a compromise between the academic and the audiolingual styles, combining, say, techniques of grammatical explanation with techniques of automatic practice. Harold Palmer in the 1920s saw classroom L2 learning as a balance between the ‘studial’ capacities by which people learnt a language by studying it like any content subject, that is to say, what is called here an academic style, and the ‘spontaneous’ capacities through which people learn language naturally and without thinking, seen by him in similar terms to the audiolingual style (Palmer, 1926). The name for this style in India was the structural-oral-situational (SOS) method, an acronym that captures several of its main features (Prabhu, 1987)—the reliance on grammatical structures, the primacy of speech, and the use of language in ‘situations’. Recently it has taken on aspects of the social communicative style by emphasising person-to-person dialogue techniques.

Box 11.10 A Chinese Teacher on Choice of Method

It is very hard to tell the one teaching method typically used by school teachers who teach English as a foreign language in China. From my observation, most English teachers in China do not confine their teaching to one single teaching method. The best metaphor to describe their teaching method is a mixed salad. They take into consideration factors such as teaching content, teaching goals as well as students’ L2 proficiency when they select their teaching methods.

Until the 1970s this early mainstream style was characterised by the term ‘situation’ in two senses. In one sense of ‘situation’ language was to be taught through demonstration in the real classroom situation; teachers rely on the props, gestures and activities that are possible in a real classroom. I remember seeing a colleague attempting to cope with a roomful of EFL beginners who had unexpectedly arrived a week early by using the only prop he had to hand, a wastepaper basket. In the other sense of ‘situation’ language teaching was to be organised around the language of the real-life situations the students would encounter: the railway station, the hotel, etc. A lesson using the mainstream

EFL style starts with a presentation phase in which the teacher introduces new structures and vocabulary. In the Australian course *Situational English* (Commonwealth Office, 1967), for example, the teacher demonstrates the use of ‘can’ ‘situationally’ to the students by touching the floor and trying unsuccessfully to touch the ceiling to illustrate ‘can’ versus ‘can’t’.

The next stage of the lesson usually involves a short dialogue. In this case it might be a job interview which includes several examples of ‘can’: ‘Can you drive a car?’, or ‘I can speak three languages.’ The students listen to the dialogue, they repeat parts of it, they are asked questions about it, and so on.

Then they may see a substitution table such as the one below, a technique suggested by Harold Palmer in 1926 that allows students to create new sentences under tight control; historically the substitution table has been traced back to Erasmus in 1524 (Kelly, 1969). Chapter 2 discusses the way substitution tables depend on structural grammar analysis. The example comes from a coursebook *Success with English* (Broughton, 1968) that used lengthy substitution tables as the main teaching technique. Here the students have to make up four true sentences by combining words from different columns—‘I have some grey gloves in my drawer’, ‘I have some black stockings in my house’.

	new	shoes	
	black	clothes	in my house.
I have some	grey	socks	in my cupboard
	white	stockings	in my drawer
	smart	gloves	in my room
	warm	hats	

Figure 11.2 A substitution table from *Success with English* (Broughton, 1968).

Substitution tables continue to appear in coursebooks. For example *speak-out* (2012) gets students to fill in forms of *be* into the table:

There	_____	a	a train at four o'clock.
	_____	some	buses this afternoon.
	_____	a lot of	taxis.
There	_____	an	airport here.
	_____	any	cars in the centre.

Figure 11.3 A substitution table in *speakout* (2012).

The substitution table is now usually treated as a method of displaying sentence structure at the end of the coursebook, an alternative to a phrase structure tree, to help the students' understanding, not a way of getting them directly to practise a structure intensively. This depends on the students having some idea both of structural grammar and of paradigm displays used in the traditional grammar discussed in Chapter 2.

The mainstream style combines Palmer's studial and spontaneous capacities. A coursebook such as the perennial *New Headway* (Soars and Soars, 2002), for instance, has elements of the academic style in that it explains structures: 'We use the Present Continuous to talk about actions that last a short time'. It has elements of the audiolingual style in that it is graded around structures and the 'four skills'. But it has also incorporated elements of social communicative teaching in pairwork exercises such as acting out conversations about solving problems.

The pivot around which the lesson revolves is the grammatical point, couched in terms of structural or traditional grammar. The main difference from the early mainstream style is the use of groupwork and pairwork and the information orientation to the exercises. A mainstream EFL method is implied every time a teacher goes through the classic progression from presentation to dialogue to controlled practice, whether it is concerned with grammar or communicative function. Many have seen this sequence of presentation, practice, production (PPP) as the chief characteristic of the mainstream style, or indeed of the audiolingual and communicative styles (Scrivenor, 1994), but not of task-based learning. The mainstream style is the central style described in TEFL manuals such as *The Practice of English Language Teaching* (Harmer, 2007). It represents perhaps the bulk of EFL teaching of the past fifty years, if not longer.

The goals are in a sense an updated version of audiolingualism. What counts is how students use language in the eventual real-world situation rather than their academic knowledge or the spin-off in general educational values. The version of learning involved is similarly a compromise, suggesting that students learn by conscious understanding, by sheer practice, and by attempting to talk to each other. Some aspects of the knowledge models seen in Chapter 10 are reflected here, as are aspects of the processing models. Mainstream EFL teaching tries to have its cake and eat it by saying that, if the student does not benefit from one part of the lesson, then another part will help. Hence while I have been using EFL courses here to illustrate particular styles, nearly all of them are actual mainstream mixtures balancing the styles.

In terms of student types as well, this broadens the coverage. One student benefits from grammatical explanation, another from structure practice, another from role-play. Perhaps combining these together will suit more of the students more of the time than relying on a purer style. Mainstream teaching does not usually encompass the information communicative style with its emphasis on listening, preferring to see listening and speaking as more or less inseparable. It has the drawbacks common to the other styles—the concentration on certain types of grammar and discourse at the expense of others.

Is such a combination of styles into one mainstream style to be praised or blamed? In terms of teaching methods, the debate has revolved around 'eclecticism'. Some have argued that there is nothing wrong with eclectic mixing of methods provided the mixing is rationally based. Others have claimed that it is impossible for the students to learn in so many different ways simultaneously; the teacher is irresponsible to combine incompatible models of language learning.

Each of the teaching styles we have seen so far captures some aspects of this complexity and misses out on others. None of the teaching styles is complete, just as none of the models of L2 learning is complete. Eclecticism is only an issue if two styles concern the same area of L2 learning rather than different areas. Hence it is, at the moment, unnecessary to speculate about the good or bad consequences of eclecticism. When there is a choice between competing styles of language teaching, each with a coverage ranging from grammar to classroom language, from memory to pronunciation, from motivation to the roles of the second language in society, then eclecticism becomes an issue. At the moment all teaching methods are partial in L2 learning terms; some areas of language are only covered by one type of teaching technique; conversely some methods deal with only a fraction of the totality of L2 learning. The mainstream EFL style cannot be dismissed simply because of its eclecticism, as it is neither more nor less eclectic than any other overall teaching style in terms of L2 learning. My own feeling is that the mainstream style does indeed reflect a style of its own that is more than the sum of its parts.

Box 11.11 The Mainstream EFL Style of Language Teaching

Typical teaching techniques:

- presentation, substitution, role-play

Goals:

- getting students to know and use language

Type of student:

- any

Learning assumptions:

- understanding, practice, and use

Classroom assumptions:

- both teacher-controlled full classes and internal small groups

Weaknesses from SLA research perspective:

- combination of other styles
- lack of role for the L1
- drawbacks of mixture of styles

Suggestions for teaching:

- do not worry about the mixture of different sources
- remember that even this rich mixture still does not cover all aspects relevant to L2 teaching

11.6. Other Styles**Focusing Questions**

- To what extent do you think teaching should aim to make students 'better' people?
- How would you strike the balance in language teaching between the students' independence and the teacher's control?

Keyword

autonomous learning: in this the choice of what and how to learn is essentially handed over to the students, whether immediately or over time.

Other teaching styles have been proposed that mark a radical departure from those outlined earlier, either in their goals or in their execution. It is difficult to call these by a single name. Some have been called 'alternative methods', but this suggests there is a common conventional method to which they provide an alternative and that they are themselves united in their approach. Some are referred to as 'humanistic methods' because of their links to 'humanistic psychology', but this label suggests religious or philosophical connections that are mostly inappropriate. Others are called 'self-access' or 'self-directed learning'. In England the practice of these styles has been so rare that they are difficult to observe in a full-blooded form, although every EFL or modern language teaching class probably shows some influence from, say, communicative teaching or TBL. Most of these methods came into being around the 1970s and attracted some enthusiastic supporters who proselytised their message around the world. However, as this generation died out, they do not seem to have been replaced by new adherents or indeed new alternative methods. SEAL (Society for Effective Affective Learning), the association for spreading the ideas of Lozanov, discussed below, once a thriving concern, was wound up

in 2007. The alternative methods have then been interesting in the ideas they have stimulated rather than in their adoption in large numbers of classrooms.

Let us start with **Community Language Learning (CLL)**, derived from the work of Charles Curran (1976). Picture a beginners' class in which the students sit in a circle from which the teacher is excluded. One student starts a conversation by remarking 'Weren't the buses terrible this morning?' in his first language. The teacher translates this into the language the students are learning and the student repeats it. Another student answers 'When do the buses ever run on time?' in her first language, which is translated once again by the teacher, and repeated by the student. And the conversation between the students proceeds in this way. The teacher records the translations and later uses them for conventional practice such as audiolingual drilling or academic explanation. But the core element of the class is spontaneous conversation following the students' lead, with the teacher offering the support facility of instant translation. As the students progress to later stages, they become increasingly independent of the teacher. CLL is one of the 'humanistic' methods that include **Suggestopedia**, with its aim of relaxing the student through means such as listening to music (Lozanov, 1978), the **Silent Way**, with its concentration on the expression of meaning abstractly through coloured rods (Gattegno, 1972), and **Confluent Language Teaching**, with its emphasis on the classroom experience as a whole affecting the teacher as much as the students (Galyean, 1977).

In general, CLL subordinates language to the self-expression of emotions and ideas. If anything, language gets in the way of the clear expression of the student's feelings. The aim is not, at the end of the day, to be able to do anything with language in the world outside. It is to do something here and now in the classroom, so that the student, in Curran's words, 'arrives at a more positive view of himself, of his situation, of what he wishes to do and to become' (Curran, 1976). A logical extension is the therapeutic use of language teaching for psychotherapy in mental hospitals. Speaking about their problems is easier for some people in a second language than in their first.

The goal of CLL is to develop the students' potential and to enable them to 'come alive' through L2 learning, not to help them directly to communicate with others outside the group. Hence it stresses the general educational value for the individual rather than local or international benefits. The student in some way becomes a better person through language teaching. The concept of 'better' is usually defined as greater insight into one's self, one's feelings and one's relationships with others. Learning a language through a humanistic style has the same virtues and vices as jogging; while it does you good, it is concerned with getting yourself fit rather than with the care of others, with the individual self not other-related goals. This type of goal partly accounts for the comparative lack of impact of CLL on the mainstream educational system, where language teaching is often thought of as having more benefit outside the classroom, and where self-fulfilment through the classroom has been seen more as a product of lessons in the mother tongue and its literature.

Hence the humanistic styles are often the preserve of part-time education or self-improvement classes. The goals of realising the individual's potential are perhaps coincidentally attached to L2 teaching; they might be achieved as well through mother-tongue teaching, aerobics, Zen, assertiveness training, or motor-cycle maintenance. Curran says indeed that CLL 'can be readily adapted to the learning of other subjects'; Suggestopedia similarly is supposed to apply to *all* education; the Silent Way comes out of an approach to teaching mathematics in the primary school.

A strong affinity between them is that they see a 'true' method of L2 learning that can be unveiled by freeing the learner from inhibiting factors. L2 learning takes place if the learner's inner self is set free by providing the right circumstances for learning. If teachers provide stress-free, non-dependent, value-respecting teaching, students will learn. While no-one knows what mechanisms exist in the students' minds, we know what conditions will help them work. So the CLL model of learning is not dissimilar to the communicative *laissez-faire* learning-by-doing. If you are expressing yourself, you are learning the language, even if such expression takes place through the teacher's mediating translation.

The other humanistic styles are equally unlinked to mainstream SLA research. Suggestopedia is based on an overall theory of learning and education using ideas of hypnotic suggestion. The conditions of learning are tightly controlled in order to overcome the learner's resistance to the new language. Georgi Lozanov, its inventor, has indeed carried out psychological experiments, mostly unavailable in English, which make particular claims for the effective learning of vocabulary (Lozanov, 1978). Again, where the outlines of an L2 learning model can be discerned, it resembles the processing models seen in Chapter 10.

Oddly enough, while the fringe humanistic styles take pride in their learner-centredness, they take little heed of the variation between learners. CLL would clearly appeal to extrovert students rather than introverts. Their primary motivation would have to be neither instrumental nor integrative, since both of these lead away from the group. Instead it would have to be self-related or teaching-group related. What happens within the group itself and what the students get out of it are what matters, not what they can do with the language outside. Nor, despite their psychological overtones, do methods such as CLL and Suggestopedia pay much attention to the performance processes of speech production and comprehension.

An opposing trend in teaching styles is the move towards learner autonomy. Let us look at a student called Mr. D, described by Henner-Stanchina (1986). Mr. D is a brewery engineer who went to the CRAPEL (Centre de Recherches et d'Applications Pédagogiques en Langues) in Nancy in France to develop his reading skills in English. He chose, out of a set of options, to have the services of a 'helper', to have personal teaching materials, and to use the sound library. The first session with the helper revealed that his difficulties were, *inter alia*, with complex noun phrases and with the meanings of verb forms.

Later sessions dealt with specific points arising from this, using the helper as a check on the hypotheses he was forming from the texts he read. The helper's role faded out as he was able to progress through technical documents with increasing ease.

The aim above all is to hand over responsibility for learning to the student. The teacher is a helper who assists with choice of materials and advises what to do but does not teach directly. As Henri Holec (1985) from the CRAPEL puts it:

By becoming autonomous, that is by gradually and individually acquiring the capacity to conduct his own learning program, the learner progressively becomes his own teacher and constructs and evaluates his learning program himself.

Using autonomous learning depends on devising a system through which students have the choice of learning in their own way. To quote Holec (1987) again:

Learners gradually replace the belief that they are "consumers" of language courses with the belief that they can be "producers" of their own learning program and that this is their right.

At North-East London Polytechnic (now University of East London), we had a system in which students could make use of language teaching material of their own choice from the selection provided in a language laboratory at any time. One afternoon per week, helpers were available in all the languages on offer. These could be used by the students in any way they liked, say discussion of which materials to use, or assessment of progress, or straightforward conversation practice. This system was particularly attractive to people like bus-drivers who work varying shifts as they could fit the timings etc to suit their convenience. Dickinson (1987) describes more sophisticated systems in operation at the Language Laboratory in Cambridge University, at Moray House in Edinburgh, and the one encountered by Mr. D at the CRAPEL in Nancy. But self-direction can also be offered to children within the secondary school classroom. Leni Dam in Copenhagen uses a system of group-based tasks chosen by the students to suit their own needs and interests, what they want to learn, and how they want to learn.

Autonomous learning is not yet widely used, nor is it clear that it would fit in with many mainstream educational systems. One reason is the incompatibility between the individual nature of the instruction and the collective nature of most classrooms and assessment. Autonomous learning takes the learner-centredness of the humanistic styles a stage further in refusing to prescribe a patent method that all learners have to follow. It is up to the student to decide on goals, methods and assessment. That is what freedom is all about. In a sense, autonomous learning is free of many of the criticisms levelled against

other styles. No teaching technique, no type of learner, no area of language is excluded in principle. Nevertheless, much depends upon the role of the helper and the support system. Without suitable guidance, students may not be aware of the possibilities open to them. The helper has the difficult job of turning the student's initial preconceptions of language and of language learning into those attitudes that are most effective for that student. SLA research can assist autonomous learning by ensuring that the support systems for the learner reflect a genuine range of choices with an adequate coverage of the diverse nature of L2 learning.

However it may be that our whole approach to language teaching is over intellectualised and controlled. What if we relaxed and simply let the teacher teach language as they and their students wanted? This is the core of the Dogme ELT approach, named after the *Dogme 95 Manifesto* produced by a group of Danish film-makers who attempted to make film more natural by eliminating all artifices such as music and artificial lighting. The core tenets of *Dogme ELT* as given by Meddings and Thornbury (2009) are given in the box.

Box 11.12 Core Precepts of Dogme ELT

- Dogme is about conversation that is *conversation-driven*
 - Dogme is about teaching that is *materials-light*
 - Dogme is about teaching that *focuses on emergent language*
- Meddings and Thornbury (2009, p. 8)

The primal situation is then the students and teachers having conversations with the students in the classroom. Any outside influences which restrict these conversations are to be shunned. The real situation is students and teachers conversing in a classroom in a particular place and time about whatever interests them. Teaching methods are irrelevant: what matters is the conversation. Coursebooks are almost pointless; the real conversational interaction in the classroom is what counts. The students' learning of language will arise naturally from the conversations in which they take part.

Natural conversation being the core of language teaching has been a sub-theme in ideas about language teaching for many years. The philosopher John Locke in 1693 said 'People are accustomed to the right way of teaching that Language, which is by talking it into Children in constant Conversation and not by Grammatical Rules.' The French teacher Lambert Sauveur in 1874 saw a lesson as 'a conversation during two hours in the French language with twenty persons who know nothing of this language'. The Conversational Analysis pioneer Evelyn Hatch in 1978 claimed 'language learning evolves out of learning how to carry on conversations', the underlying rationale behind my own course *English for Life*, the second volume of which, *Meeting People*

(Cook, 1982), dealt with the topics that people talk about in the first five minutes of getting to know each other. The Interaction Hypothesis presented in the last chapter saw learning as coming from the give-and-take involved in the negotiation for meaning in the classroom.

The difference about Dogme is that it claims to abandon the unnatural structuring of conversation imposed by teaching methods and materials. Conversation should arise out of the interests and background of the learners; it provides natural scaffolding for the learner's attempts; it involves the social relationships of the learner (Halliday's interpersonal function), not just the transfer of information (the ideational function); it starts by acknowledging the reality of the classroom itself, not an imitation reality of other places. This does not mean that the examples of teaching techniques promoted by Dogme are not fairly mainstream, such as 'Lightning talks' (one minute spontaneous talks) and 'Headlines' (highlighting 'a recent event in your life').

Box 11.13 Other Styles of Language Teaching

Typical teaching methods:

- CLL, Suggestopedia, confluent language teaching, self-directed learning

Goals:

- individual, development of potential, self-selected

Type of student:

- those with personal motivations

Learning assumptions:

- diverse, mostly learning by doing, or a processing model

Classroom assumptions:

- learner's freedom of choice

Weaknesses from a SLA research perspective:

- either no view of learning or idiosyncratic views
- little attention to learner variation

Classroom assumptions

- usually small groups

Suggestions for teachers

- a reminder of the importance of the students' feelings
- open discussions with students over their needs and preferences

11.7. Conclusions

The diversity of L2 teaching styles seen in this chapter may seem confusing: how can students really be learning language in so many ways? However, such diversity reflects the complexity of language and the range of student needs; why should one expect that a system as complex as language could be mastered in a single way? Even adding these teaching styles together gives an inadequate account of the totality of L2 learning. Second language learning means learning in all of these ways and in many more. This chapter has continually been drawing attention to the gaps in the coverage of each teaching style, particularly in terms of breadth of coverage of all the areas necessary to an L2 user—not just grammar or interaction but also pronunciation, vocabulary and all the rest. As teachers and methodologists become more aware of SLA research, so teaching methods can alter to take them into account and cover a wider range of learning. Much L2 learning is concealed behind such global terms as ‘communication’ or such two-way oppositions as ‘experiential/analytic’ or indeed simplistic divisions into six teaching styles. To improve teaching, we need to appreciate language learning in all its complexity.

But teachers live in the present. They have to teach now rather than wait for a whole new L2 learning framework to emerge. They must get on with meeting the needs of the students, even if they still do not know enough about L2 learning. David Reibel once presented a paper at a conference entitled ‘What to do until the linguist gets here’. According to Jung, a psychoanalyst treating an individual patient has to set aside theories in order to respond to the uniqueness of that particular person. Teachers too have the duty to respond to their students. To serve the unique needs of actual students, the teacher needs to do whatever is necessary, not just that which is scientifically proven and based on abstract theory.

And the teacher needs to take into account far more than the area of SLA research; in the present state of knowledge, SLA research has no warrant to suggest that any current teaching is more than partially justified. This book has therefore made suggestions and comments rather than asserted dogmatic

axioms. Practising teachers should weigh them against all the other factors in their unique teaching situation before deciding how seriously to take them. Considering teaching from an L2 learning perspective in such a way will, it is hoped, lead in the future to a more comprehensive, scientifically based view of language teaching.

Discussion Topics

- 1 Think of what you did or saw done the last time you visited a class; would you say the terms to characterise it best were 'techniques', 'approaches', 'styles', or what?
- 2 To what extent does the academic style incorporate traditional values of education, say those held by the 'man in the street' or government ministries, compared to the values of other styles?
- 3 What aspects of the audiolingual style are still practised today, whatever they are actually called?
- 4 To what extent do students carry over the ability to communicate socially from their first language to their second?
- 5 If communicative teaching is about transferring 'information', what information do you feel should be conveyed during the language lesson?
- 6 Should classroom tasks in fact relate to the world outside the classroom?
- 7 Does task-based learning represent a whole new method of language teaching or is just a way of organising some aspects of teaching?
- 8 In what ways do you think language teaching has changed in the past seventy years so far as the average classroom is concerned?
- 9 Does teaching an 'alternative' style mean adopting an 'alternative' set of values?
- 10 Which aspect of SLA research have you found most useful for language teaching? Which least?

Further Reading

The models are best approached through the main texts cited in each section, namely Lado, Rivers, Curran, etc. Any modern teaching methodology book should cover the more recent methods, say Ur (1996), *A Course in Language Teaching*. For TBL Willis and Willis (2007), *Doing Task-Based Teaching* is good value. The two articles by Swan (1985; 2005) should remind people to moderate their enthusiasm for new teaching methods by taking practical issues into consideration. For CLIL see Coyle, Hood and Marsh (2010), *CLIL*, and for Dogme see Meddings and Thornbury, *Teaching Unplugged* (2009). A sympathetic account of alternative methods can be found in Earl Stevick (1980) *Teaching Languages, A Way and Ways*.

Glossary of Teaching Techniques

dialogue: usually a short constructed piece of conversation used as a model of language and to introduce new words or structures, sometimes presented from a recording, sometimes in writing.

drill (pattern practice): a form of mechanical practice in which words or phrases are substituted within a frame and practised till they become automatic.

exploitation activity: freer activities that follow up the formally structured part of the lesson in the audiolingual method by allowing the students to use what has been learnt in their own speech.

focus on form (FonF): discussion of grammar and vocabulary in TBL arising from meaningful language in the classroom.

focus on FormS: discussion of grammar in the classroom for its own sake.

gap activities: these set up an artificial knowledge gap between the students which they have to solve by communicating with each other.

grammar explanation: giving students explicit guidance about grammatical rules or other aspects of language.

guided role-play: students play out a situation in the classroom playing roles usually set by the teacher with information supplied to them.

information gap exercise: an exercise that gives different students different pieces of information which they have to exchange.

substitution table: a language teaching technique where students create sentences by choosing words from successive columns of a table.

task: 'A task is an activity which requires learners to use language, with emphasis on meaning, to attain a goal' (Bygate, Skehan and Swain, 2001).

texts: chunks of language used by teaching, whether authentic (i.e. produced outside the classroom for communicative purposes) or constructed for the classroom, ranging from literature to graffiti.

translation: a technique that involves the students and teachers translating words, sentences or texts, in order to learn the language, i.e. different from codeswitching or from professional translation.

Coursebooks Mentioned

These are arranged by book title since this is the usual way teachers refer to them. It should be obvious from the titles which are not teaching English.

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- All's Well That Starts Well* (1975) A. Dickinson, J. Levêque, H. Sagot and Gilbert. Paris: Didier, DL
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- How to Improve Your Memory* (1987) A. Wright, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
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- International Express* (1996) L. Taylor, Oxford: Oxford University Press
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- Just Right* (2004) J. Harmer, London: Marshall-Cavendish
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- Learning to Learn English* (1989) G. Ellis and B. Sinclair, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
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