SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

THE STUDY OF LANGUAGE BY GEORGE YULE

SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNING

- **Learning in a 'foreign language' setting (EFL): Learning a language that is not generally spoken in the surrounding community.**

- **Learning in 'second language' setting (ESL): Learning a language that is spoken in the surrounding community.**

  - **Example:**
    - **EFL:** Japanese students learning English in Japan.
    - **ESL:** Japanese students learning English in USA.
  - Both situations can be referred to as **Second Language Learning**.

More on the difference between EFL and ESL:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=soYWBBNkC6o

ACQUISITION OR LEARNING?

- **Acquisition: The gradual development of ability in a language by using it naturally in communicative situations with others who know the language.**

- **Learning: A more conscious process of accumulating knowledge the features of a language [such as vocabulary and grammar] in an institutional setting.**

  - **Examples:**
    - Learning: Students learning math in schools.
    - Acquisition: Children acquiring a 2nd language. How? **From long periods spent in interaction constantly using a language with native speakers of a language.**

ACQUISITION BARRIERS

- **The second language (L2)** is **usually** encountered during **teenage** or **adult years** in a few hours each week of school.
  - Very few adults seem to reach **native-like proficiency** in using an **L2**.
    - **Example:** Joseph Conrad, a Polish writer who was excellent when writing in English but not in Speaking. He is regarded as one of the greatest novelists in English.
- After the **critical period** has passed, around the time of puberty, it becomes **very difficult** to **acquire** a language **fully**.

AFFECTIVE FACTORS

- Many **L2** learners have feelings of **unwillingness** or **embarrassment** in attempting to produce the different sounds of a language.
  - This may **override** their **physical** and **cognitive abilities** there are i.e. **inhibit** the **learning process**.
- This type of **emotional reaction** or **'affect'** may also be caused by **dull textbooks**, **unpleasant classroom surrounding** or an **exhausting schedule of study** and/or **work**.
- **These negative feelings or experiences are affective factors that can create a barrier to acquisition.**
  - i.e. if we are stressed, uncomfortable, self-conscious or unmotivated, then we are unlikely to learn anything.

FOCUS ON METHOD

There are different methods used that aim at fostering L2 learning, among which are:

1. The Grammar-Translation Method

2. The Audio-Lingual Method

3. Communicative Approaches

FOCUS ON METHOD
THE GRAMMAR-TRANSLATION METHOD

1- The Grammar-translation method:

- A **traditional** approach that **used vocabulary lists** and **grammar rules** to **define** the target language.

- **Memorization** is **encouraged**.

- **Written** language rather than spoken language is **emphasised**.

- It was mainly used to **teach dead languages** such as Latin.

  - Students do **well** in **exams** but face **difficulty** when using the language in **everyday** conversation.

Example: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RKjCGBCD4FY 1:18

FOCUS ON METHOD
THE AUDIO-LINGUAL METHOD

2- The Audio-lingual method:

- This approach emphasised **spoken** language.
- The main technique used is to have students **repeat** in order to **memorize structures.**
- **Belief: Fluent use** of a language is essentially a set of **'habits'** that could be **developed** with a lot of **practice** .
  - **i.e.** by repeating oral drills.

Example: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pz0TPDUz3FU , 3:07

FOCUS ON METHOD
COMMUNICATIVE APPROACHES

3- Communicative Approaches:

- These methods came **against** the belief that **consciously learning** the **grammar rules** of a language will necessarily **result** in an **ability** to **use** the language.

- Instead, **functions** of a language (**what it is used for**) should be **emphasised** rather than **forms** of the language (**correct grammatical or phonological structures**).

  - Example: A class to focus on the function of 'asking' in different social settings rather than the forms of past tense.

Example: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3kRT-rsKxn4 0:54

FOCUS ON THE LEARNER
TRANSFER

- Recently, focus has **shifted** from the **teacher**, **textbook** and **method** **to** the **learner** and the **acquisition process**.

  - **Example:** Errors were seen negatively before, but are now seen as a natural part of the learning process.

- Some errors may be due to *transfer.*

  - Also called **cross-linguistic influence**.

  - **Transfer**: **Using sounds, expressions or structures from L1 when performing in the L2.** There are two types of transfer:

    1. **Positive transfer**: **Benefitting from an L1 rule in L2 which has it.**

    2. **Negative transfer (interference):** **Using an L1 rule in L2 that isn't found in L2.**

FOCUS ON THE LEARNER
MOTIVATION

Motivation is a factor that helps students **learn**. There are two types of motivation:

1. **Instrumental Motivation: Learning a language in order to achieve another goal,** such as completing a school graduation requirement or being able to read scientific publications, **but not really for social purposes.**

2. **Integrative Motivation**: **Wanting to learn L2 for social purposes,** in order to take part in the social life of a community using that language.

COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE

Communicative Competence: The general ability to use language <u>accurately</u>, <u>appropriately</u> and <u>flexibly</u>.

1. **Grammatical Competence: The accurate use of words and structures.**
   - This alone is not enough to be able to use L2 appropriately.

2. **Sociolinguistic Competence: The ability to use appropriate language.**
   - **Examples:** "Can I have some water?" rather than "Give me some water!" according to social context.

3. **Strategic Competence: The ability to organize a message effectively and to compensate, via strategies for any difficulties.**

MORE ON STRATEGIC COMPETENCE

- In L2 use, learners inevitably experience moments when they have trouble saying something. What to do?
  - Some people stop talking → bad idea!
  - Some people use other ways to express themselves using a *communication strategy* → good idea!

How?

- By using **synonyms** to substitute for words the speaker cannot **recall** or has not yet **learned**.
  - **Example:** 'the things that horses wear under their feet' instead of 'horseshoes'.
    - This way a speaker can use vocabulary they know in order to describe a word they don't know.