

丁言仁 著

# 第二语言习得研究与外语学习

SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION FOR ENGLISH MAJORS



上海外语教育出版社

# 第二语言习得研究与外语字习

Second Language Acquisition For English Majors

丁言仁 著



外教社® 上海外语教育出版社

## 图书在版编目 (CIP) 数据

第二语言习得研究与外语学习 / 丁言仁著. —上海:  
上海外语教育出版社, 2004

ISBN 7-81095-028-2

I. 第… II. 丁… III. 第二语言—外语教学—教学研究  
—英文 IV. H09

中国版本图书馆CIP数据核字 (2003) 第093863号

出版发行: **上海外语教育出版社**

(上海外国语大学内) 邮编: 200083

电 话: 021-65425300 (总机), 35051812 (发行部)

电子邮箱: bookinfo@slep.com.cn

网 址: <http://www.slep.com.cn> <http://www.slep.com>

责任编辑: 刘 璟

---

印 刷: 上海锦佳装璜印刷发展公司  
经 销: 新华书店上海发行所  
开 本: 850×1168 1/32 印张 8.5 字数 208 千字  
版 次: 2004 年 4 月第 1 版 2004 年 4 月第 1 次印刷  
印 数: 3 500 册

---

书 号: ISBN 7-81095-028-2 / H · 007

定 价: 15.00 元

本版图书如有印装质量问题, 可向本社调换

## *Preface*

The purpose of this book is to offer a general picture of the field of Second Language Acquisition (SLA), including its history (if 40 years of growth can be called history at all), controversies, and current development. It is my hope that the book will help readers unfamiliar with the field of SLA to approach it with a better sense of direction. The book is not intended to give a comprehensive review of all the research findings; it is impossible to accomplish this mission with a book of this size. Neither is it intended to present the controversies in the field from an onlooker's "objective," non-partisan perspective. Rather, my belief is that readers should be encouraged to engage themselves, take sides, and support their opinions with their own research. Compared with memorizing terms, theories and hypotheses, this is probably an easier way to initiate oneself into an academic field.

The book is also intended to be of some help in improving English teaching in China. It tries to highlight issues and research findings that may help us better understand the challenges facing us Chinese teachers and learners of the English language, and for that matter, leaves out issues I do not consider very relevant. For instance, it makes no mention of the research related to Chomsky's "Universal Grammar" such as the

projection studies and studies on the accessibility hierarchy.

I understand that by being selective and opinionated, I may be carried away by personal bias and ignorance. For all the inaccuracies and mistakes, I assume full responsibility and would like to offer my apologies here. Readers should indeed make their own judgment by comparing the discussions in this book with those in their other readings and, more importantly, with their own experiences of language learning and teaching.

I am indebted to Barbara Penney, my one-time colleague from Nanjing University and currently an Amity teacher at Fuzhou Teachers College, who patiently read an earlier version of the manuscript, did much editing, and offered many invaluable comments and suggestions.

I should also thank Northwest University in Xi'an for giving me a very light teaching load so that I could finish the manuscript during the time when I was teaching there.

Ting Yenren

Nanjing University

## ABBREVIATIONS USED IN THIS BOOK

<b>CS</b>	communication strategy
<b>ESL</b>	English as a second language
<b>FL</b>	foreign language
<b>FLA</b>	first language acquisition
<b>FT</b>	foreigner talk
<b>IRF</b>	initiate-response-feedback
<b>L1</b>	first language
<b>L2</b>	second language
<b>LAD</b>	language acquisition device
<b>MT</b>	mother talk; caretaker talk
<b>NNS</b>	non-native speaker
<b>NS</b>	native speaker
<b>SLA</b>	(1) second language acquisition (2) research on second language acquisition
<b>TL</b>	target language
<b>TT</b>	teacher talk
<b>TTT</b>	teacher talk time
<b>UG</b>	universal grammar

# *Contents*

<b>Chapter One</b>	<b>Puzzles in SLA</b>	1
1.1	A Recent Acronym	1
1.2	SLA as a Field of Learning	3
1.3	Issues for Exploration	5
1.3.1	Description	6
1.3.2	Explanation	8
1.3.2.1	External Factors	8
1.3.2.2	Internal Factors	10
1.4	The Organization of This Book	12
1.5	The Use of This Book	15
<b>Chapter Two</b>	<b>The Influence of Behaviorism</b>	17
2.1	The “Interference” of L1	17
2.1.1	Pronunciation	18
2.1.2	Syntax	21
2.1.3	Semantics and Pragmatics	22
2.2	The Behaviorist Understanding of SLA	24
2.2.1	“Rat Psychology”	24
2.2.2	The Audio-Lingual Method	26
2.3	Contrastive Analysis	28

## SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION FOR ENGLISH MAJORS

---

2.3.1	Its Strong Form and Weak Form .....	28
2.3.2	Decline in Popularity .....	29
2.4	Criticism from Empirical Research .....	32
2.5	Conclusion .....	35

### **Chapter Three The “Chomskyan Revolution” .....**

3.1	Introduction .....	39
3.2	Chomskyan Linguistics .....	39
3.2.1	Response to Behaviorism .....	39
3.2.2	ABC of Universal Grammar .....	40
3.2.3	The Innateness Hypothesis .....	42
3.2.4	The Hypothesis-Testing Hypothesis .....	44
3.2.5	A Simple Chronology .....	45
3.3	Criticisms of Chomskyan Linguistics .....	47
3.3.1	Piaget’s Debate with Chomsky .....	47
3.3.2	The Criticisms That Never Go Away .....	48
3.4	Interlanguage Hypothesis .....	51
3.4.1	The Coining of the Word .....	51
3.4.2	Insights from FLA Research .....	53
3.5	Error Analysis .....	55

### **Chapter Four Natural Order and Comprehensible Input .....**

4.1	Introduction .....	61
-----	--------------------	----



4.2	Natural Order Hypothesis .....	61
4.3	Morpheme Studies and Their Findings .....	63
4.3.1	Finding the Acquisition Sequence .....	63
4.3.2	Some Specific Findings .....	64
4.3.3	Pienemann's Study .....	66
4.4	Problems with Error Analysis and Morpheme Studies .....	72
4.5	Comprehensible Input Hypothesis .....	75
4.5.1	The "i + 1" Theory .....	75
4.5.2	Flaws in Krashen .....	78

**Chapter Five      Variability in Performance  
                            and Acquisition .....**      82

5.1	Introduction .....	82
5.2	Variability in L1 Use .....	82
5.2.1	Labov vs. Chomsky .....	82
5.2.2	Social Dialects of New Yorkers .....	85
5.3	Variability in L2 Learner Language .....	87
5.3.1	Rod Ellis Study (1987) .....	88
5.3.2	Foster and Skehan Study (1996) .....	92
5.4	Role of Variability in SLA .....	94
5.5	Learner Variation .....	97
5.5.1	Age .....	98
5.5.2	Cognitive Style .....	101
5.5.3	Personality .....	104

## SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION FOR ENGLISH MAJORS

---

5.5.4	Attitudes and Motivation .....	105
5.5.5	Aptitude .....	106
5.6	Research into the Origin of Aptitude; A Conclusion .....	108
<b>Chapter Six</b>	<b>Input and Interaction .....</b>	<b>114</b>
6.1	Introduction .....	114
6.2	Terminology .....	114
6.3	Input and Interaction in L1 Acquisition .....	117
6.4	Input and Interaction in Natural Settings .....	120
6.4.1	Foreigner Talk .....	120
6.4.2	The FT Controversy .....	121
6.4.3	Ways of Meaning Negotiation .....	123
6.5	Input and Interaction in Classroom Settings .....	125
6.6	Effects of Input and Interaction on SLA .....	129
6.6.1	The Frequency Hypothesis .....	129
6.6.2	The Vertical Constructions .....	130
6.6.3	The Learning of Formulaic Sequences .....	132
6.6.4	The Interaction Hypothesis .....	133
6.7	Criticism of the Interaction Hypothesis .....	135
6.8	Swain's Output Hypothesis .....	139
6.9	Empirical Studies on the Role of Interaction .....	141
6.9.1	Studies by Rod Ellis et al. (1994, 1995) .....	142
6.9.2	The Lyster and Ranta Study (1997) .....	144

---

<b>Chapter Seven</b>	<b>Learner Strategies</b>	149
7.1	Introduction	149
7.2	Difficulty with Definition	149
7.3	Production Strategies	152
7.3.1	Planning and Monitoring	152
7.3.2	The Strategy of Using Formulaic Language	153
7.4	Communication Strategies	157
7.4.1	Achievement Strategies	159
7.4.2	Reduction Strategies	164
7.4.3	Some Comments	165
7.5	Learning Strategies	166
7.6	The Role of Memorization Strategies	171
<b>Chapter Eight</b>	<b>Noticing the Native Speaker Selection</b>	176
8.1	Introduction	176
8.2	The Noticing Hypothesis	176
8.2.1	Background	176
8.2.2	Explaining the “Wes Phenomenon”	178
8.2.3	The Use of Compensatory Strategy	182
8.3	Effects of the Noticing Hypothesis	183
8.3.1	The Role of Instruction	183
8.3.2	Impact on Empirical Research	187
8.4	Noticing the Native Speaker Selection	189

8.5 A New Model of Language ..... 194

**Chapter Nine Developing L2 Literacy:  
Reading** ..... 202

9.1 Introduction ..... 202

9.2 Mainstream Approaches to Literacy Development ..... 203

    9.2.1 Reading by Ear or by Eye ..... 203

    9.2.2 The Bottom-Up Model ..... 205

    9.2.3 The Top-Down Model ..... 207

    9.2.4 The Interactive Model ..... 208

    9.2.5 Influence on L2 Reading Instruction ..... 209

9.3 Post-Modernist Approaches: Recent Development ..... 213

    9.3.1 Critical Literacy ..... 213

    9.3.2 Reader-Response Theory ..... 216

9.4 Reading for Meaning vs. Reading for L2 Learning ..... 218

**Chapter Ten Developing L2 Literacy:  
Writing** ..... 222

10.1 Introduction ..... 222

10.2 L2 Writing: Process and Product Approaches ..... 222

10.3 L2 Writing as Compared to L1 Writing ..... 226

10.4 The Bandwagon of Contrastive Rhetoric ..... 228

    10.4.1 Culture-Dependent “Thought Patterns” ..... 228

    10.4.2 Problems with the Research ..... 230

    10.4.3 Causes of L2 Rhetorical Problems ..... 234

## CONTENTS

---

10.4.4	Attraction to Learners and Teachers .....	236
10.5	Developing L2 Literacy Skills .....	238
10.5.1	Inadequacy of the Pipeline Model .....	238
10.5.2	Writing as Reader .....	240
	<b>References</b> .....	243
	<b>Index</b> .....	249

## *Chapter One*

# **Puzzles in SLA**

### **1.1 A Recent Acronym**

SLA is a fairly recent acronym and stands for the term “second language acquisition.” It has two meanings. It refers to (1) the conscious or unconscious processes by which people learn (or acquire) a second language, but it also refers to (2) the study of these processes, which is a very important part of applied linguistics. This is somehow like the word “psychology”: it refers to the study of the mind and character, but in informal speech, it may also mean the character itself (and the way character influences behavior). In this book, we call the language acquired in the first few years of one’s life one’s mother tongue or first language (**L1**). Any language one acquires in addition to this first language is called a second language (**L2**). In SLA literature, L2 may also be called “target language,” the language one is trying to learn or acquire.

SLA — we’re using its first meaning — takes place in two kinds of settings. It may happen in **natural settings** (or **naturalistic settings**), as when children acquire their mother tongue: no one teaches children any grammar rules, but by age five or six, they are said to be in good command of almost all the basics of their mother tongue. Many people acquire their L2 this

## SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION FOR ENGLISH MAJORS

---

way. Some of them, especially young children in immigrant families, do reach the same level of competence as native speakers. However, many others acquiring L2 this way never reach full competence. We are familiar with the situation of families settling in a new city: in a few years' time, the children are very competent in the local dialect while their parents still speak with the heavy accent of their native dialect; these parents never reach full competence. If they are immigrants, they will always be seen as outsiders.

**TASK 1.1:** The following story takes place in an immigrant family. What does it tell us about language learning?

Father: Son, Mom and I are having an argument, and we'd like you to be the judge. In your opinion, whose English is better, Mom's or Dad's?

Son: You're both terrible.

SLA may also take place in **classroom settings**. That is, you go to a class to learn the second language; in class, you often have to pay conscious attention to grammar rules and vocabulary items and have to make an effort to commit them to memory. This is called **instructed** or **tutored SLA**, which we are all very familiar with. Through instruction, people may also reach a high level of competence, but if they do not have opportunities to practice the language in real-life communication, their L2 will not be very fluent or idiomatic. And if they do not contin-

ue learning, their L2 will get rusty and finally be forgotten. Such loss of a language is called **attrition**. Some classroom language learners may become very competent and be able to produce sentences that are grammatically correct; however, many of the grammatical sentences they produce are not found in the speech or writing of native speakers — they are not idiomatic. Researchers have been trying to explain this problem and to come up with good advice for these advanced learners and their teachers.

## 1.2 SLA as a Field of Learning

Now we are using SLA in its second meaning. As the world in which we live is becoming a global village, it is increasingly important that we know each other's languages and become able to communicate with each other effectively. Sociolinguists will add that it is usually people from Third World countries who learn the languages of the developed countries. English, for instance, has the status of "world language" and is being learned the world over; there are even more people learning and using it as an L2 than there are people who speak it as their L1. It is a language vital for the development of such a Third World country as China. At any rate, in response to the increasing need to learn and teach a second language and the need to improve such learning and teaching, the investigation into the processes whereby people acquire an L2 has grown into an important subject of study, and this is the field of **SLA research**.

As SLA researchers, we are interested in what people actually do in the process of developing this additional language re-



ardless of whether or not they themselves are consciously aware of the details of this process. When we are learning to ride a bicycle, we are doing many things together, and we can roughly put them in three categories:

- Things we can describe in words; for instance, when a boy is learning to ride a bike, we can tell him: “Hold the handles with two hands.”
- Things we know we are doing but cannot describe clearly; for instance, we know we are moving the handles in a way that keeps our balance on the bike, but we do not necessarily know how to describe the rules of the movement.
- Things we are doing although we do not know we are doing them; for instance, few of us are aware that when we are making a turn on the bike, we are also moving our body to keep our balance.

There is also another category: things we think we are doing although we are actually not doing them. A young boy, for instance, often thinks he is riding the bike well until his nose hits the ground. Similarly, most native speakers and learners of English as an L2 mistakenly believe that when they say the words “input” and “greenhouse,” they are uttering / 'ɪnpʊt / and / 'grɪnhaʊs /, but it is actually / 'ɪnpʊt / and / 'grɪnhaʊs / that they are uttering. In fact, all the four situations can be found in the study of SLA, and examples are abundant. When we study SLA, we have to consider all the four possibilities.