

牛津
语言学入门丛书

丛书主编 H.G.Widdowson

Second Language Acquisition

第二语言习得

Rod Ellis



上海外语教育出版社

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出版前言

在语言研究方面不乏详尽权威的导论。但这些学术专论都趋于冗长且学术性太强,对初学者来说大有泰山压顶之势。于是,“牛津语言学入门丛书”,这套让人们循序渐进、轻松地掌握复杂概念的过渡性简明教程,就应运而生了。

人们在对语言的特定细节进行剖析之前,应该对语言整体有个大致的了解。作为供语言学研究方向的学生进行深入研究之前的热身阅读,这套丛书的主旨是为人们理解那些学术性强的语言学专著奠定理论基础。因为这套丛书浅显易懂,对那些感兴趣却并非专门从事语言研究的人进一步了解语言也大有裨益。

本套丛书采用了统一的结构模式,在“前言”之后,由“概述”、“阅读材料”、“参考书目”和“术语表”四个部分构成。第一部分概述是全书的主体,也是有关该领域研究的导论。第二部分提供与书中各章节内容相应的深入阅读的材料,其后所附的问题极具启发性,有助于读者形成对有关领域研究的独立见解。第三部分提供相应章节的参考书目,并对它们的主要内容作了点评,以便有兴趣的学习者深入学习。第四部分列出术语表,帮助初学者了解有关术语的定义。

《第二语言习得》为本丛书之一,出版于1997年,是一部介绍第二语言习得研究近年来的成果的导论性著作。作者R·埃利斯(Rod Ellis)教授在美国费城坦普尔大学教育学院工作,从事作为第二语言的英语教学研究,曾于1985年出版了《第二语言习得概论》(*Understanding Second Language Acquisition*)。

本书的特点是：

一、浅显易懂，适合初学者自己阅读和独立思考。

二、力求客观性。第二语言习得的研究尚处于初级阶段，还不存在被公认接受的理论，因此作者尽可能对各种理论作客观的介绍。

三、强调理论对实践的指导作用。

本书的主体(概述部分)分为十章。第一章从明确第二语言习得的定义开始，提出该领域研究的主要目标，并通过案例分析，对第二语言习得、教学方法和学习者的语言进行了阐述。第二章至第九章是本书的中心内容，提出并讨论了以下关键问题：学习者语言的性质，中介语(Interlanguage)及其社会、语篇、心理语言学和语言学方面的特征，第二语言习得过程中的学习者的个体差异，各种课堂教学方法对第二语言习得的作用等等。第十章并没有提供一个囊括不同视角的第二语言习得模式，而是强调了第二语言习得研究的多面性，探讨了对第二语言习得进行多视角的研究的前景。

本套丛书的读者对象是英语专业高年级学生，语言学、应用语言学与相关专业研究生以及对相应领域感兴趣的人员。欢迎读者对我们的工作提出宝贵意见。

本社编辑部

2000年1月

Second Language Acquisition

Rod Ellis is Professor of Teaching English as a Second Language at the College of Education of Temple University, Philadelphia.

Published in this series:

Rod Ellis: *Second Language Acquisition*

Bernard Spolsky: *Sociolinguistics*

H.G. Widdowson: *Linguistics*

George Yule: *Pragmatics*

Preface

Purpose

What justification might there be for a series of introductions to language study? After all, linguistics is already well served with introductory texts: expositions and explanations which are comprehensive and authoritative and excellent in their way. Generally speaking, however, their way is the essentially academic one of providing a detailed initiation into the discipline of linguistics, and they tend to be lengthy and technical: appropriately so, given their purpose. But they can be quite daunting to the novice. There is also a need for a more general and gradual introduction to language: transitional texts which will ease people into an understanding of complex ideas. This series of introductions is designed to serve this need.

Their purpose, therefore, is not to supplant but to support the more academically oriented introductions to linguistics: to prepare the conceptual ground. They are based on the belief that it is an advantage to have a broad map of the terrain sketched out before one considers its more specific features on a smaller scale, a general context in reference to which the detail makes sense. It is sometimes the case that students are introduced to detail without it being made clear what it is a detail *of*. Clearly, a general understanding of ideas is not sufficient: there needs to be closer scrutiny. But equally, close scrutiny can be myopic and meaningless unless it is related to the larger view. Indeed, it can be said that the precondition of more particular enquiry is an awareness of what, in general, the particulars are about. This series is designed to provide this large-scale view of different areas of language

study. As such it can serve as a preliminary to (and precondition for) the more specific and specialized enquiry which students of linguistics are required to undertake.

But the series is not only intended to be helpful to such students. There are many people who take an interest in language without being academically engaged in linguistics *per se*. Such people may recognize the importance of understanding language for their own lines of enquiry, or for their own practical purposes, or quite simply for making them aware of something which figures so centrally in their everyday lives. If linguistics has revealing and relevant things to say about language, then this should presumably not be a privileged revelation, but one accessible to people other than linguists. These books have been so designed as to accommodate these broader interests too: they are meant to be introductions to language more generally as well as to linguistics as a discipline.

Design

The books in the series are all cut to the same basic pattern. There are four parts: Survey, Readings, References, and Glossary.

Survey

This is a summary overview of the main features of the area of language study concerned: its scope and principles of enquiry, its basic concerns and key concepts. These are expressed and explained in ways which are intended to make them as accessible as possible to people who have no prior knowledge or expertise in the subject. The Survey is written to be readable and is uncluttered by the customary scholarly references. In this sense, it is simple. But it is not simplistic. Lack of specialist expertise does not imply an inability to understand or evaluate ideas. Ignorance means lack of knowledge, not lack of intelligence. The Survey, therefore, is meant to be challenging. It draws a map of the subject area in such a way as to stimulate thought, and to invite a critical participation in the exploration of ideas. This kind of conceptual cartography has its dangers of course: the selection of what is significant, and the manner of its representation will not be to the liking of everybody, particularly not, perhaps, to some of those

inside the discipline. But these surveys are written in the belief that there must be an alternative to a technical account on the one hand and an idiot's guide on the other if linguistics is to be made relevant to people in the wider world.

Readings

Some people will be content to read, and perhaps re-read, the summary Survey. Others will want to pursue the subject and so will use the Survey as the preliminary for more detailed study. The Readings provide the necessary transition. For here the reader is presented with texts extracted from the specialist literature. The purpose of these readings is quite different from the Survey. It is to get readers to focus on the specifics of what is said and how it is said in these source texts. Questions are provided to further this purpose: they are designed to direct attention to points in each text, how they compare across texts, and how they deal with the issues discussed in the survey. The idea is to give readers an initial familiarity with the more specialist idiom of the linguistics literature, where the issues might not be so readily accessible, and to encourage them into close critical reading.

References

One way of moving into more detailed study is through the Readings. Another is through the annotated References in the third section of each book. Here there is a selection of works (books and articles) for further reading. Accompanying comments indicate how these deal in more detail with the issues discussed in the different chapters of the survey.

Glossary

Certain terms in the Survey appear in bold. These are terms used in a special or technical sense in the discipline. Their meanings are made clear in the discussion, but they are also explained in the Glossary at the end of each book. The Glossary is cross-referenced to the Survey, and therefore serves at the same time as an index. This enables readers to locate the term and what it signifies in the more general discussion, thereby, in effect, using the Survey as a summary work of reference.

Use

The series has been designed so as to be flexible in use. Each title is separate and self-contained, with only the basic format in common. The four sections of the format, as described here, can be drawn upon and combined in different ways, as required by the needs, or interests, of different readers. Some may be content with the Survey and the Glossary and may not want to follow up the suggested references. Some may not wish to venture into the Readings. Again, the Survey might be considered as appropriate preliminary reading for a course in applied linguistics or teacher education, and the Readings more appropriate for seminar discussion during the course. In short, the notion of an introduction will mean different things to different people, but in all cases the concern is to provide access to specialist knowledge and stimulate an awareness of its significance. This series as a whole has been designed to provide this access and promote this awareness in respect to different areas of language study.

H.G. WIDDOWSON

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SECTION I
Survey

1

Introduction: describing and explaining L2 acquisition

What is 'second language acquisition'?

The systematic study of how people acquire a second language (often referred to as an L2) is a fairly recent phenomenon, belonging to the second half of the twentieth century. Its emergence at this time is perhaps no accident. This has been a time of the 'global village' and the 'World Wide Web', when communication between people has expanded way beyond their local speech communities. As never before, people have had to learn a second language, not just as a pleasing pastime, but often as a means of obtaining an education or securing employment. At such a time, there is an obvious need to discover more about how second languages are learned. *and how to teach*

At first sight, the meaning of the term 'second language acquisition' seems transparent but, in fact, it requires careful explanation. For one thing, in this context 'second' can refer to any language that is learned subsequent to the mother tongue. Thus, it can refer to the learning of a third or fourth language. Also, 'second' is not intended to contrast with 'foreign'. Whether you are learning a language naturally as a result of living in a country where it is spoken, or learning it in a classroom through instruction, it is customary to speak generically of 'second' language acquisition.

'L2 acquisition', then, can be defined as the way in which people learn a language other than their mother tongue, inside or outside of a classroom, and 'Second Language Acquisition' (SLA) as the study of this.

What are the goals of SLA?

Imagine that you are an SLA researcher, interested in finding out how learners acquire an L2. How would you set about doing it? One way might be simply to ask learners who have been successful in learning a second language how they did it. This approach has been used and has provided some valuable insights. It is, however, somewhat limited in that learners are probably not aware of or cannot remember the actual learning processes they engaged in. A better approach might be to find out what learners actually do, as opposed to what they think they do, when they try to learn an L2. One way of doing this is by collecting samples of **learner language**—the language that learners produce when they are called on to use an L2 in speech or writing—and analyse them carefully. These samples provide evidence of what the learners know about the language they are trying to learn (the **target language**). If samples are collected at different points in time it may also be possible to find out how learners' knowledge gradually develops. What we might seek to do, then, is to *describe* how learner language changes over time.

But what exactly should you look for in samples of learner language? You may decide to focus on how learners' overall ability to communicate develops, how they become more fluent in their use of an L2. In general, however, SLA has not focused on these communicative aspects of language development but on the formal features of language that linguists have traditionally concentrated on. One example might be the pronunciation of an L2; how learners' accents change over time. Another might be the words learners use; how learners build up their vocabulary. Most often, however, the focus has been the grammar of the L2. Researchers select a specific grammatical structure, such as plurals or relative clauses, and explore how learners' ability to produce this structure develops over time.

One of the goals of SLA, then, is the *description* of L2 acquisition. Another is *explanation*; identifying the external and internal factors that account for why learners acquire an L2 in the way they do.

One of the external factors is the social milieu in which learning takes place. Social conditions influence the opportunities that