

第二语言习得导论

*An Introduction to Second
Language Acquisition*

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山东大学出版社

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前 言

第二语言习得(简称“二语习得”)是一种复杂的人文现象,主要研究人们在掌握母语后习得第二语言的过程和规律,其理论体系的构建是以描述二语习得过程和解释二语习得特征为主要目标。一般认为,作为一门独立的学科,其成立的标志为 1967 年英国语言学家 Corder 在国际语言学刊物 *International Review of Applied Linguistics* 上发表著名的 *The Significance of Learners' Errors* 经典论文。近四十年来,国际范围内的二语习得研究蓬勃发展。二语习得最初是应用语言学的一个分支,主要对语言学提供帮助,研究方法从借鉴语言学、心理学、教育学、社会学、第一语言习得等相关学科的研究方法,但随着中介语假设的提出,二语习得从应用语言学和生成语言学理论中分离出来,成为一门独立的学科。研究者在借鉴的基础上创新并建立了适合本学科研究的方法论体系,从早期的旨在改进二语教学研究,到后期的探讨二语知识的大脑表征和语言习得机制等研究,研究热点在转换,研究领域在扩展,现在二语习得研究已经发展成为一门诸多学科交叉的有明确研究对象和研究方法的独立学科,并迅速发展成为当代语言学的研究热点之一。从 20 世纪 80 年代开始国外就有大学开设了二语习得系、专门教授和系统研究二语习得,形成了二语习得学科的学士、硕士、博士培养体系,此外,有关二语习得研究的学术机构、学术专著和国际学术期刊如 *Second Language Re-*

search, *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, *Language Learning* 等不断涌现,国际学术会议定期召开,所有这一切都显示了这门新兴学科的强大生命力和广阔的发展前景。

由于历史原因,国内学术界接触二语习得理论和开展相关理论研究始于20世纪80年代中期。二十多年来,二语习得理论不断引入我国,给国内语言学与应用语言学者们以极大的启发,二语习得研究在国内经历了从开始引进和介绍西方二语习得理论阶段逐步进入到自主研究和创新的发展阶段。进入新世纪后,我国二语习得研究发展尤为迅速(文秋芳,2008)。目前为止,我国已举办了三届二语习得研究学术会议,2008年还举办了亚太地区二语习得研究论坛,正式成立了中国二语习得研究的学术团体。有关二语习得研究成果不仅数量迅速增加,而且研究领域日益拓宽,研究水平不断提高,研究队伍不断壮大,充分显示了国内二语习得研究的生机活力和大好局面。应该看到,西方现有的二语习得理论主要是以印欧语言为基础,虽然一些假说、理论模式具有一定的普遍意义,但汉语是离印欧语言谱系较远的一种语言,中国的外语学习者的学习过程有着特殊的问题,在中国的环境下研究二语习得更有其重要的现实意义(戴炜栋,2007)。

在编写本书时我力求反映第二语言习得研究的最新成果,本着理论联系实际、重点突出的原则,力求具有实用性和可操作性。全书共分11章,可分为三部分。第一部分包括第一、二、三章,目的是为读者了解第二语言习得的方式和过程,本部分首先讨论了第二语言习得的学科定位、性质以及主要涵盖内容,然后论述了对比分析体现的行为主义的语言习得观和学习者语言的本质特征等。第四章到第九章内容构成了本书的第二部分,也是本书的重点。编者分别从学习者外部因素、学习者内部因素以及学习者个人因素三个角度详细阐释了第二语言习得的过程。第三部分包括第九、十、十一章,本部分主要从教学法的角度出发,探讨了课堂环

前 言

境中的二语习得,着重分析了“输入式”教学和“输出式”教学对二语习得所起的不同作用,最后指出了二语习得发展前景的多视角性质。本书可以作为广大外语教师、研究人员和高等学校外语专业本科生和研究生的教材或参考书,以便他们了解该学科的知识体系和国内外最新研究动态,发现研究问题。

本书的问世得益于许多人的帮助。2001年我有幸考入上海外国语大学,师从戴炜栋教授攻读英语语言文学博士学位,获得了三年学习和研究的宝贵经历。且不说每周一次的seminar使我对二语习得很多问题有了深入思考,先生谦和的为人、严谨的治学更是时时激励着我。我还要感谢我所教过的研究生同学们,在我讲授“二语习得”这门课程中,他们对这门课的兴趣和课堂内外的提问是本书问世的最大动力。2008年我有幸获得“山东省高等学校优秀骨干教师国际合作培养项目”资助赴英国利兹大学访学,访学期间,曾就本书的写作与Simon博士讨论,Simon博士不仅自始至终关心本书的写作,并就第四、五章的写作提出了很好的建议。另外,在本书的写作过程中我参考了国内外一些重要文献,融合了一些重要的学术研究成果,对此在文中或参考文献中均已注明。同时本书的写作和出版也得到了山东师范大学外国语学院领导的大力支持和帮助,在此一并致谢。

人类对语言和语言习得的了解依然有限,在今后相当长的时间内,第二语言习得的研究仍将是众说纷纭,争论、分歧与共识并存的年代。由于时间仓促,加上作者水平有限,书中肯定存在不少疏漏和欠缺之处,在此诚望有关专家、同仁和广大读者批评指正。

王 栋

2009年5月于泉城济南

List of Abbreviations

CA	Contrastive Analysis
EA	Error Analysis
EFL	English as a Foreign Language (used interchangeably with ESL in the book)
ELT	English Language Teaching
ESL	English as a Second Language
FL	Foreign Language
L1	First Language
L2	Second Language
LLS	Language Learning Strategies
SLA	Second Language Acquisition
TEFL	Teaching English as a Foreign Language
TESOL	Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages

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Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Defining second language acquisition (SLA)

What comes to mind for many people when they encounter the phrase “second language acquisition”, is the experience they had as school students when they were engaged in the study of one or more foreign languages. Many learners are multilingual in the sense that in addition to their first language they have acquired some competence in more than one non-primary language. Multilingualism is the norm in many Asian countries. The meaning of the term “second language acquisition” seems transparent, but it needs some explanation (Ellis 1997). However, “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. “L2 acquisition” can be defined as the way in which people learn a language other than their mother tongue, inside or outside of a classroom (Ellis 1997, 2000).

The systematic study of how people acquire a second language (L2) is a fairly recent phenomenon, belonging to the sec-

ond half of the 20th century. In 1967, S. P. Corder published "The Significance of Learners' Errors" in *International Review of Applied Linguistics*. In this seminal article, Corder observes that the learner's errors are indicative both of the state of the learner's knowledge, and of the ways in which a second language is learned. He makes an important distinction between mistakes or performance errors, and true errors, or markers of the learner's transitional competence. Sentence containing errors would be characterized by systematic deviancy. While the learner's correct sentences do not necessarily give evidence of the rules the learner is using or of the hypotheses he is testing, his errors suggest the strategies he employs to work out the rules of the new language and the rules he has developed at given stages of his language development. Corder also lays out the rationale for investigating learners' errors. Five years later, Larry Selinker (1972) also published a monumental paper "Interlanguage" in *International Review of Applied Linguistics*. This paper is not easy to read, but it gives SLA the term "interlanguage" and it contains a rich seam of theoretical ideas that is still being mined today. Selinker introduces the term "interlanguage" to suggest the intermediate stages between the native and target language observable in learners' language. Selinker proposes that the data on which theories of second language learning should be based must be the learner's real or attempted communication in the second language. Selinker (1992) later assumes that there are "psychological structures" latent in the brain which are activated when one attempts to learn a second language. While not all would see the need to postulate "different psycholinguistic

processes” to explain successful and unsuccessful language learning, since motivation, time available, and numerous other factors may be decisive, the interest in Selinker’s paper is his typology of attempted learning, resulting in an interlanguage, that is, a different language system from either the mother tongue or the target language. Selinker refers to language transfer, transfer of training, strategies of learning, strategies of communication, and overgeneralization of target language linguistic material. These or similar concepts are referred to by a number of other researchers (Krashen 1985; Gass & Selinker 1994; Larsen-Freeman 2000). Besides Selinker’s useful discussion of the five aspects of interlanguage performance, his discussion of the relevant units which characterize second language speech is interesting. He is skeptical of the use of concepts derived from linguistic description of syntax. Likewise phoneme is not necessarily the ideal unit for describing the phonological units in the learner’s speech. It has been generally acknowledged that the publication of these two papers has been considered the beginning of SLA as an independent discipline (Jiang 1999; Yang *et al.* 2007).

1.2 Second language and foreign language

A distinction between second and foreign language acquisition is sometimes made. In the case of second language acquisition, the language plays an institutional and social role in the community, that is, it functions as a recognized means of communication (official language) among members who speak other languages as their mother tongue (Stern 1997; Larsen-Freeman 2000). For

example, English as a second language is learned in the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, and some countries in Africa such as Zambia. In contrast, foreign language learning takes place in settings where the language plays no major role in the community (not official language) and is primarily learnt in the classroom. For example, English as a foreign language is learnt in China, Japan, Korea or Vietnam.

The distinction between second and foreign language learning settings may be significant in that it is possible that there will be radical differences in both what is learnt (content) and how it is learnt (learning style) (Stern 1997; Larsen-Freeman 2000). However, for the time being, the extent to which the sociolinguistic conditions of learning determine learning outcomes or learning processes still remains an open question—waiting to be answered as a result of our exploration. There is a need for a neutral and superordinate term to cover both types of learning. Second language acquisition is not intended to contrast with foreign language acquisition, either. SLA is used as a cover term that embraces both naturalistic and classroom acquisition. Currently, the relationship between SLA and FLL is a unidirectional one in which theories and hypotheses flow from SLA to FLL (VanPatten 1990; Yang *et al.* 2007). This is to say, SLA plays the role of a producer and FLL the role of a consumer. This can be schematized as in Figure 1.1 which is adapted from VanPatten (1990). In this relationship, FLL is subsumed under SLA and is thought to be some special type of language acquisition context. Thus, since FLL is a “subset” of SLA, then whatever is true for FLL must also be true for SLA, but not vice versa (Ellis 1999;

Larsen-Freeman 2000). At present, SLA is apparently much more mature than FLL, which can be reflected by the papers published in such international journals as *Language Learning*, *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, and *Applied Linguistics*. Therefore, any research on FLL must refer to relevant studies in SLA and this is in fact the practice in applied linguistics. A glimpse of the papers on FLL published has shown that they all have benefited greatly from previous studies in SLA. In this unidirectional producer-consumer relationship, FLL benefits a lot from SLA but not vice versa (see Figure 1.1). Yet their desired relationship is bi-directional where SLA and FLL can benefit each other. In this way, the FL context can eventually serve as the testing ground for some of the hypotheses in SLA. And if these hypotheses are rejected, then research in FLL may offer new ones. Thus the original producer-consumer relationship between the two may be reversed.

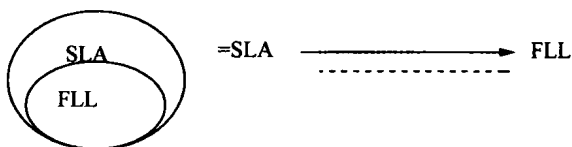


Figure 1.1 The producer-consumer relationship

1.3 Second language acquisition and language teachers

All teachers have a theory of language learning (Ellis 1999; Mitchell & Myles 1998). Although there is not a unique connec-

tion between a particular view of language teaching and a particular theory of language learning, our teaching practice definitely reflect our view of language learning. According to Ellis (1999), EFL teachers teach in accordance with a set of principles about the way language learners behave. This theory, however, may not be explicit. In many cases the teacher's views about language learning will be covert and will only be implicit in what he does. For instance, an English teacher may decide to start teaching a class of complete beginners the Present Continuous Tense. In so doing, he may have consciously decided that grammar should take precedence over other aspects of language such as pronunciation or vocabulary in the early stages for he believes that this corresponds to the learners' order of priorities. Or he may simply have assumed this without conscious enquiry. Ellis (1999) points out that the decision to begin with the Present Continuous Tense has further implications. One is that learning can and should begin with verbs, rather than nouns or some other part of speech. Another is that out of all the verb tenses the Present Continuous is the one the learner will need to learn first. The English teacher may be aware of these implications or he may not. He may have intuitions which he has never made explicit. Language teaching cannot take place without a theory of language learning, but this may exist only as a set of covert beliefs (Ellis 1999; Mitchell & Myles 1998).

It is only when principles are made explicit that they can be examined with a view to amending or replacing them. English teachers who operate in accordance with implicit beliefs may be not only uncritical but also resistant to change (Ellis 1999). Al-

ternatively they may shift and change in an unprincipled way, following blindly the latest fashion in language teaching. EFL teachers who make explicit the principles by which they teach are able to examine those principles critically. This is based on the belief that teachers will do better to operate with a theory of language learning that is explicit and therefore open to revision, than with an implicit theory that may ignore what learners actually do. Greater consciousness of the complex process of language learning will not guarantee more effective teaching—arguably our state of knowledge is insufficient to warrant firm pedagogical applications—but it will stimulate critical thought, challenge old principles, and maybe suggest a few new ones (Stern 1997; Larsen-Freeman 2000). A conscious understanding of SLA is a basis for modifying and improving teaching. "... unless we know for certain that the teacher's scheme of things really does match the learner's way of going about things, we cannot be sure that the teaching content will contribute directly to language learning." (Ellis 1999)

SLA provides a body of knowledge which teachers can use to evaluate their own pedagogic practices. It affords a learning-and learner-centered view of language pedagogy, enabling teachers to examine critically the principles upon which the selection and organization of teaching have been based and also the methodological procedures they have chosen to employ. Every time teachers make a pedagogic decision about content or methodology, they are, in fact, making assumptions about how learners learn. "They provide a methodology." (Ellis 1999; Mitchell & Myles 1998) The study of SLA may help teachers in two ways. First,