

**SECOND OR FOREIGN LANGUAGE ACQUISITION THEORIES:  
HOW DO THEY FIT INTO THAI CONTEXTS**

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 THE DILEMMA OF TEACHER EDUCATION IN SECOND LANGUAGE TEACHING

To prepare effective language teachers, it is necessary to have a theory of effective language teaching - a statement of the general principles that account for effective teaching, including a specification of the key variables in effective language teaching and how they are interrelated. Such a theory is arrived at through the study of the teaching process itself. This theory should form the basis for the principles and content of second language teacher education, which is thus dependent upon the following sequence: (a) describe effective language teaching processes; (b) develop a theory of the nature of effective language teaching; and (c) develop principles for the preparation of language teacher.

There are, in fact, two approaches to the study of teaching from which theories of teaching as well as principles for teacher preparation programs can be developed. The first, a *micro approach* to the study of teaching, is an analytical approach that looks at teaching in terms of its directly observable characteristics. It involves looking at what the teacher *does* in the classroom. The second, a *macro approach*, is holistic (see Britten 1985a, b) and involves making generalizations and inferences that go beyond what can be observed directly in the way of quantifiable classroom processes. Both approaches can be used to develop theories of effective teaching and to derive principles for teacher education. However, they lead in different directions and this is the dilemma of teacher education.

### 1.2 MOTIVES FOR THE STUDY OF MODERN LANGUAGES

- a. A knowledge of modern language is one of the accomplishments of a cultivated man.
- b. Modern languages are perpetuated in linguistic islands or linguistic colonies within another speech area.
- c. There is a necessity of creating a political fusion or a homogeneous social unit.
- d. Trade and colonization constitute a fourth motive: If you want to do business with people, you can do it best in their language.
- e. Scientific and technical necessity furnishes us with the final motive for the study of foreign languages.

(Albert H. Marckwardt, **Motives for the Study of Modern Languages**, Language Learning, Vol.38 No.2, June 1988)

## 2. WHY DO WE NEED A FOREIGN LANGUAGE?

- a. A foreign language is a credential just as a degree in engineering is - it's worth something on your resume.
- b. Knowing another language allows you to operate in a bigger world than the one defined by your native language, especially in the era of information superhighways.

- c. Your foreign contacts (diplomatic, political, and commercial) will be favorably impressed by your seriousness of purpose in understanding their contacts and dealing with them.
- d. A foreign language opens the door to a foreign culture. It will open your eyes to the outside world.
- e. When you learn a foreign language, you learn a lot more about your own language
- f. You can expand the horizon of your brain functions to cover more areas of knowledge.

### **3. SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION THEORIES AND TEACHING PRACTICE : A CRITICAL REVIEW**

Let me provide a sketchy account of some currently prevalent theories which try to explain how second or foreign languages are learned. McLaughlin mentions five of those theories: Interlanguage Theory, Linguistic Universals Theory, Acculturation/Pidginization Theory, Cognitive Theory, and Krashen's Monitor Model. Ellis adds some more: Accommodation Theory, Discourse Theory, The Variable Competence Model, and the Neurofunctional Theory.

Generally, language acquisition theories fall into five general categories: 1) those attempting a behavioristic explanation, emphasizing the role of conditioning; 2) those attempting an interactionist explanation, emphasizing communicative/social need, purpose, and setting; 3) those attempting a cognitive explanation, emphasizing logical, intellectual processes; 4) those attempting a nativist or biological explanation, emphasizing innate, genetic abilities; and 5) those emphasizing the learner and learning strategies. Because of time constraints, I will restrict myself to reviewing the following seven theoretical models which I believe most relevant to FL educators: 1) Acculturation/ Pidginization Theory; 2) Linguistic Universals Theory; 3) Interlanguage Theory; 4) Discourse Theory; 5) Cognitive Theory; 6) the Monitor Model; and 7) Cooperative Learning Theory.

#### **3.1 ACCULTURATION/PIDGINIZATION THEORY**

The Acculturation/Pidginization Theory advanced, among others, by Schumann, holds that second language acquisition is part of an acculturation process and that the degree of language proficiency is determined by the degree to which a learner acculturates to the target language (TL) group.

This acculturation process is affected by the social and psychological "distance" between the home and the foreign cultures. These social and psychological variables determine the effort language learners will make to come into contact with speakers of the TL and the degree to which they are open to the input they receive. Some of the factors which, according to Schumann, are believed to be conducive to positive social distance are the perceived social similarity between the L1 culture L2 groups, the similarity between the native and TL cultures, low cohesiveness by the "outsiders" as a cultures group within the TL culture (i.e., easy integration and assimilation into the TL culture), positive attitudes toward each other, and an expectation by the L2 learner to stay in the TL area for an extended period.

Positive psychological distance is established if learners encounter neither language nor culture shock nor culture stress and if they bring high motivation and ego permeability to the task.

Acculturation Theory suggests that when social and psychological distance is great. i.e., when attitudes toward the TL and its speakers are negatively loaded and integrative motivation is lacking, learners will have difficulties progressing beyond the early stages in language development, and the language will stay pidginized or will fossilize in reduced and simplified forms).

We can quite clearly see that Acculturation accounts mainly for naturalistic L2 acquisition. However, we need to keep in mind the importance of attitudes and motivation in the L2 acquisition process, which might play a similar role in classroom foreign language learning. So, it is difficult to reject the notion that affective factors determine the effort a student makes in and out of the classroom to obtain input and to use the language for communicative purposes.

### 3.2 LINGUISTIC UNIVERSALS THEORY

Through investigating surface features of human languages, linguists are continuing to discover general sets of principles that apply to all languages. The theory of Linguistic Universals, or Universal Grammar Theory, tries to explain language acquisition (L1 and L2) by hypothesizing a shared, innate, biological, linguistic component in the genetic make-up of human beings which accounts for these universally shared linguistic features. Universal Grammar Theory holds “that the child starts with all the principles of Universal Grammar available” and that “the right environmental input at the right time furthers the acquisition process” (14: pp. 93, 94) The theory posits that Universal Grammar becomes operative in L1 as well as in that for adults. While originally it was believed that this “mental language organ,” or language acquisition device (LAD), atrophies with the onset of puberty, a number of studies indicate no qualitative differences between the adult and the child learner, except in pronunciation ability. In fact, adults - because of increased channel capacity due to maturational factors-might be the more efficient foreign language learners, particularly if exposure time and input are limited to that of a traditional language course. In a totally naturalistic setting the child continues to be superior, not because of a better functioning LAD, but, it is now believed, because of differences in quantity and quality in the available input.

What is of interest to us is that Linguistic Universals Theory posits an inherent hierarchy of difficulty among the universal “rules” which depend on the “degree of markedness” or complexity, of a certain structure. It is believed that those structures which fall under the universal core grammar are less marked and more easily acquired than the structures idiosyncratic to a particular language (also called peripheral grammar).The more highly marked structures would need to occur much more frequently in the input of the learner than the less marked ones to assure their acquisition.

If in fact, all natural languages are constrained by universal principles inherent in our genetic make-up, and if these principles can be arranged in a certain “accessibility hierarchy,” it follows that first and second languages, examining the interlanguages, i.e. the language output at a particular stage of linguistic development, of various learners in naturalistic as well as in classroom learning situations. While error analyses indicate that interlanguages are influenced by a number of factors, studies have shown a tendency for some errors to occur at particular stages of acquisition, regardless of the learner’s mother tongue or age or the way the language was acquired. In other words, the types of errors made by L2 as well as FL learners

are constrained by their universal grammar (14: p.98). Here is where Universal Grammar Theory interfaces with Interlanguage Theory.

### 3.3 INTERLANGUAGE THEORY

Selinker defines interlanguage as a separate linguistic system, constructed by the learner as the result of five central cognitive processes: 1) language transfer from the mother tongue; 2) transfer of training, resulting from special features of instruction; 3) second language learning strategies; 4) second language communication strategies; and 5) overgeneralization of the rules of the target language. Through error analyses of speech and writing samples of learners at various stages, researchers have found that interlanguages reflect systematic patterns of error and communication strategies. Many of these errors are developmental and will eventually disappear if the learner receives sufficient appropriate input.

Interlanguage forms found in early language acquisition can also be found in pidgin languages. The speakers of a pidgin language fossilize at a relatively early stage of interlanguage development because, as it is believed, they receive insufficient input and lack the motivation or need to perfect their language skills since their limited communication needs can be satisfactorily fulfilled without grammatical accuracy. Continued comprehensible input, however, can help learners overcome that stage and continue to move toward closer approximation of the target language.

So, what are the implications of Interlanguage Theory for FL teaching? As you may understand, *Extended comprehensible input* helps learners shape their output to an increasingly closer approximation of the TL norm. Formal instruction, i.e., Grammar analysis and discrete - point grammar practice, can temporarily improve performance on discrete- point tests, but apparently has relatively little influence on spontaneous language use.

### 3.4 DISCOURSE THEORY

Discourse theory postulates that learners develop competence in a second language not simply by absorbing input, but by actively participating in communicative interaction, i.e., by negotiating meaning and filling information gaps. Ellis states a main hypothesis of Discourse Theory, which applies to L1 as well as L2 acquisition: "The development of the formal linguistic devices for realizing basic language function grows out of the *interpersonal use* to which language is put (p.259)

Like other theories already mentioned, Discourse Theory addressed L2 acquisition in a naturalistic setting. We might nonetheless want to examine the principles advanced by Hatch and summarized by Ellis (pp. 259-60) for implications for foreign language learning:

- 1) SLA follows a "natural" route in syntactical development. [Hatch believes this "natural" route is determined by the predictable discourse -which, of course, includes predictable input - in which L2 learners engage]
- 2) Native speakers adjust their speech in order to negotiate meaning with nonnative speakers; intuitively they speak more slowly, louder, use shorter: sentences and less complex structures.
- 3) The conversational strategies used to negotiate meaning, and the resulting adjusted input, influence the rate and route of SLA in a number of ways.
  - a) the learner learns the grammar of the L2 in the same order as

- the frequency order of the various features in the input, i.e., the learner masters first those structures to which or she is exposed most frequently;
- b) the learner acquires commonly occurring formulas and then *later* analyses these into their component parts:
  - c) the learner is helped to construct sentences vertically ,i.e., by borrowing parts of speech of preceding discourse, also known as “scaffolding” . . . .

### 3.5 COGNITIVE THEORY

Instead of stressing innate, universal linguistic processes, affective factors, input, or interaction as causative factors for second language development, Cognitive Theory sees second language learning as a mental process, leading through structured practice of various component subskills to automatization and integration of linguistic patterns. While Discourse Theory posits that language is available for analysis *after* it has been acquired or routinized, Cognitive Theory maintains that skills become automatic or routinized only *after* analytical processes. Controlled analytical processes - including, of course, structured practice - are seen as “stepping stones” for automatic processes.

Rather than positing a hierarchical development of linguistic structures, such as suggested by Interlanguage Theory, Cognitive Theory posits a hierarchy of complexity of cognitive subskills which lead from controlled practice to automatic processing of language. As the learner develops increasing degrees of mastery, he or she engages in a constant process of restructuring to integrate new structures with those previously learned. Cognitive learning thus is seen to consist of several different phases where the learning tasks become refined, restructured, and consolidated.

The notion that analysis and structured practice foster automatic processing of language and are essential to foreign language development in a classroom setting is not new. Increasingly, however, researchers question whether L2 acquisition is a skill-similar to driving a car or playing the piano-that can be mastered exclusively through controlled operations of subskills which lead eventually to their automatic processing, i.e., to spontaneous communicative language use. Cognitive Theory with a sprinkling of Discourse Theory and behaviorist conditioning-seems to account most closely for what foreign language teachers and current textbooks try to accomplish in classroom instruction. The prevalent grammatical syllabus does try to lead students through analysis and explanation (controlled processing) to automatic processing through - albeit limited - practice. One important tenet of Cognitive Theory, however, is not sufficiently reflected in teaching practice or in textbooks. Cognitive Theory posits a constant and continuing restructuring and integrating through various recurrent phases. like most other theories which try to account for L2 acquisition. Cognitive Theory recognizes a certain spiral or cyclical development of language skills, where the interim language of the student permits continuing refinement and closer approximation to the TL. In current FL classroom teaching and testing practice, we do not sufficiently recognize and further that cyclical refinement with continuing input and practice. Our expectations of immediate accuracy and mastery are not supported by the tenets of any theory.

### 3.6 THE MONITOR MODEL

The most ambitious and widely known - as well as presently the most controversial - theory which attempts to account for L2 and FL acquisition is Krashen's Monitor Model. This theory is also the only one from which direct pedagogical extrapolations have been made in the so called Natural Approach. Since the Monitor Model has received extensive attention, both laudatory and critical, in the professional literature, I would like to just provide a brief summary of its five main tenets.

Krashen's Acquisition/ Learning Hypothesis maintains that adult or adolescent language learners have two processes at their disposal to help them in developing language fluency. One is acquisition, the other, learning. Acquisition is subconscious and takes place through natural language interactions, similar to those available to children when they acquire their mother tongue. Learning, on the other hand, requires conscious thought and analysis and takes place predominantly in formal instruction. According to Krashen, only language that has been acquired is available for use in spontaneous communication.

The Natural Order Hypothesis, inspired by Universal Grammar and Interlanguage Theory, maintains that we acquire grammatical structures in a predictable order not determined by the order in which they are taught.

The Input Hypothesis, in Krashen's words, refers to his belief that "humans acquire language in only one way -by understanding messages, or by receiving 'comprehensible input' . . ." Two corollaries of the Input Hypothesis state:

1) Speaking is a result of acquisition and not its cause. Speech cannot be taught directly but "emerges" on its own as a result of building competence via comprehensible input.

2) If input is understood, and there is enough of it, the necessary grammar is enough of it, the necessary grammar is automatically provided. The language teacher need not attempt deliberately to teach the next structure along the natural order it will be provided in just the right quantities and automatically revised if the student receives a sufficient amount of comprehensible input.

The Monitor Hypothesis holds that formal learning has no effect on acquisition except that it can serve as a monitor or editor for the learner's output provided 1) there is sufficient time; 2) the focus of the interaction is on form rather than meaning; and 3) the learner knows the rule in question.

The Affective Filter Hypothesis posits a mental screen between the learner and the environment which is activated by affective factors such as anxiety, self-confidence, etc. and which controls the amount of input a student is exposed to and the amount of input a student converts into intake. A high affective filter promotes it. In Krashen's words (12 : p. 33): ". . . comprehensible input and the strength of the filter are the true *causes* of second language acquisition"

Krashen's Monitor Model has been criticized on a number of points. Of major interest to us are the criticisms levied against his acquisition learning dichotomy and his view of comprehensible input as sole explanatory factor for second language acquisition. Obviously, we can all attest from personal experience that skills which at one time were learned consciously through segmentation and analysis can eventually become automatic through practice and be available automatic through practice and be available for spontaneous use. To what extent this conscious analysis is "necessary" or helpful for foreign language learning when sufficient and appropriate comprehensible input is *not* available remains a major problem.

### 3.7 COOPERATIVE LEARNING MODEL

Cooperative learning is one of the most useful organizational ideas recently advanced for changing the educational process, engaging the minds of students, and connecting schooling to the world of work. While collaboration in the classroom is not new, it has only recently gained serious attention from educational researchers.

The basic concept revolves around teacher organized active small group learning environments. Students cluster together, discuss topics and learn to take charge of their learning. Team spirit, rather than individual rivalry, is stressed as students learn to work together to accomplish a learning goal and their team is held responsible for each group member's learning. The students' objective is not only complete a task, but to learn something as a team. The success of one student aids others.

Recent research suggests cooperative groups produce more and better ideas than students working alone. Cooperative discussion has proven that it can increase retention and improve the problem solving ability of all students. Discussion aids learning as peers encourage each other. Not surprisingly, one of the clearest findings, is that cooperative learning improves social relations among students (Slavin, 1989).

Blueprints for collaborative knowledge building include strategies for connecting thinking to collaborative groups. Students learn how to jointly search out information on questions generated by individuals or the group. They learn techniques for analyzing, interpreting, negotiating and communicating their information as a team. Instead of the traditional emphasis on competitive individual performance students are encouraged to pool their talents of help each other learn, and come up with group products.

## 4. FROM THEORY TO PRACTICE

Language acquisition- be it first, second, or foreign - is an extreme complex process, particularly difficult to penetrate since it cannot be directly observed. None of the theories discussed above offers a complete and coherent explanation. Most attempt to explain how a second language is learned by examining only one of the many contributing factors. Eventually, a more complete theory of L2 acquisition will have to account for biological/innate, the social/interactive, the cognitive., and the behaviorist aspects of language learning. In addition, a sound pedagogy will have to keep in mind the mass possible individual learner factors which inhibit second language development in a classroom setting.

Few psycholinguists, however, venture into the pedagogical implications of current theories. Unfortunately or fortunately, those of us who are FL teachers do not have the luxury of waiting around for the definitive theory and its verification by research before deciding on what to do in the classroom. So, let me attempt to find some pedagogical implications in the theories just discussed.

Extrapolating from naturalistic child language acquisition to adult or adolescent, foreign language learning in a classroom is difficult because major differences exist between these modes: differences in the psychological, and intellectual maturity between both groups of learners, in situations and settings in which interaction occurs, in the type and amount of input available, in the types of communicative acts that occur and their underlying purposes in available language-use opportunities, in personal motivation to avail oneself of such opportunities, etc. As a practical example, input and interaction opportunities available in the classroom differ from those encountered on the playground. And a Thai student hoping to study



in Australia is likely to make a greater effort finding target language texts and speakers to interact with than the Australian student who is taking Thai to fulfill a language requirement. Obviously, naturalistic language learning takes place one-on-one classroom learning, one on many. And because of the nature of learning, in general, which proceeds on a highly individualistic basis, students are frequently at different levels of language development, even though they are in the same class. Then what are some common tenets, shared by the theories discussed, which do have implications for teaching?

When we consider the currently rather inconclusive state of L2 acquisition theory and research, input and interaction clearly play a major role in language learning, in and outside the classroom. Motivation also clearly affects both the amount of input students seek and the number of communicative interactions in which they are willing to engage.

## 5. EVALUATION

For the last few decades, FL learning has gained increasing attention. The Scholarly and research activities abound: in fact, L2/FL acquisition and teaching are emerging as separate fields of inquiry, interdisciplinary in nature, at a number of institutions.

As we English teachers examine and revise our curricula in response to this renewed interest and try to fulfill a national mandate to develop usable language skills in our students, we can all benefit by critically examining the implicit and explicit assumptions which guide our teaching in light of recent theoretical and research developments. Based on the present state of L2 acquisition theory and research, I would like to recommend that our curriculum planning and teaching activities be guided by three basic questions:

- 1) How can we supply students with the optimum amount of interesting, comprehensible input?
- 2) What can we do to provide students with opportunities to interact in the language in real communicative contexts and with real communicative purposes?
- 3) What can we do to increase students' motivation so that they are willing to seek additional input and interactive opportunities and continue their efforts beyond the classroom instruction which we in Thailand considers inadequate for becoming communicative in another language?

In conclusion here, I can assure you that satisfactory responses to these questions will improve our success rate in teaching. In other words, student motivation, language in put, and communicative interaction may well be the most important factors in FL learning and may, in my final analysis, decide our students' level of language proficiency.

## 6. IMPORTANT AND NECESSARY CONDITIONS FOR SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNING

Following are some of the important and necessary conditions for second language learning which Thai teachers can selectively apply both in and outside the classroom for a better and more effective teaching. Those marked \*\*\*\*\* are the most important and worth discussing here.

### **Condition 1\*\*\*\*\***

Language as System condition (necessary): A second language learner's knowledge of a second language forms a systematic whole.

### **Condition 2**

Native speaker Target condition (typical, graded): Second language Learner language aims to approximate native speaker language.

### **Condition 3**

Productive/Receptive Skills condition (necessary, graded): Individual language learners vary in their productive and receptive skills.

### **Condition 4**

Implicit Knowledge condition (typical, graded): Language knowledge analysed and so available for recombination, may be intuitive and so not be consciously available to the learner.

### **Condition 5**

Explicit Knowledge condition (typical, graded): Analysed language knowledge may be consciously available to the speaker who is able to state a rule or explain the reason for a decision to use a certain form.

### **Condition 6**

Communicative Goal condition (typical, graded): Language learners may aim to achieve various degrees of control of a language for communicative purposes.

### **Condition 7**

Integrated Function condition (necessary): Knowledge of a language involves control of one or more integrated functional skills.

### **Condition 8\*\*\*\*\***

Human Learner condition (necessary, postulate): A general theory of second language learning deals with the learning of a second or later language by a human being who has already learned a first language.

**Condition 9\*\*\*\*\***

Physiological Normality condition (necessary): Any physiological or biological limitations that block the learning of a first language will similarly block the learning of a second language.

**Condition 10**

Native Pronunciation condition (typical, graded): The younger one starts to learn a second language, the better chance one has to develop a native-like pronunciation.

**Condition 11\*\*\*\*\***

Child's Openness condition (typical, graded): The greater openness to external influence of a child favours the learning of a second language in informal situations.

**Condition 12**

Child's Dependence condition (typical, graded): The social situation faced by a child in a second language environment favours second language learning.

**Condition 13**

Sound Discrimination condition (necessary, graded): The better a learner can discriminate between the sounds of the language and recognize the constituent parts, the more successful his or her learning of speaking and understanding a second language will be.

**Condition 14\*\*\*\*\***

Memory condition (necessary, graded) In learning a new language, the better the learner's memory, the faster he or she will learn new items and the larger his or her vocabulary will be. This ability may vary for learning words aurally and visually.

**Condition 15**

Grammatical Sensitivity condition (necessary, graded): Beyond the necessary minimum ability to derive a grammar implicitly, the better a learner's ability to recognize constituents and develop or understand generalizations about recombination and meaning (whether from explicit or implicit generalizations, in whatever forms), the faster he or she will develop control of the grammatical (and pragmatic) structure of a second language.

**Condition 16\*\*\*\*\***

Learning Style Preference condition (typical, graded): Learners vary (both individually and according to such characteristics as age, level, and cultural origin) in their preference for learning style (visual, auditory, kinesthetic, and tactile) and mode (group or individual): as a result, learning is best when the learning opportunity matches the learner's preference.

**Condition 17**

Language Distance condition (necessary, graded): The closer two languages are to each other genetically and typologically, the quicker a speaker of one will learn the other.

**Condition 18**

Shared Feature condition (necessary, graded): When two languages share a feature, learning is facilitated.

**Condition 19**

Contrastive Feature condition (necessary, graded): Differences between two languages interfere when speakers of one set out to learn the other.

**Condition 20**

Markedness Differential condition (necessary, graded): Marked features are more difficult to learn than unmarked.

**Condition 21**

Shared Parameter condition (necessary): When both native and target language have the same setting for some parameter of Universal Grammar (=have the same rule), minimal experience will be needed to trigger the correct form of the grammar.

**Condition 22**

Number of Speakers condition (typical, graded): The number of people who speak a language as a first or second language influences the desire of others to learn it.

**Condition 23**

Standard Language condition (necessary): Formal teaching situations are possible only with standardized languages.

**Condition 24**

Vitality condition (necessary): Informal learning situations are possible only with languages with vitality.

**Condition 25**

Aptitude condition (typical, graded): The greater a learner's aptitude, the faster he or she will learn all parts of the second language.

**Condition 26\*\*\*\*\***

Exposure condition (necessary, graded): The more time spent learning any aspect of a second language, the more will be learned.

**Condition 27\*\*\*\*\***

Motivation condition (typical, graded): The more motivation a learner has, the more time he or she will spend learning an aspect of second language.

**Condition 28**

Attitude condition (typical, graded): A learner's attitudes affect the development of motivation.

**Condition 29**

Instrumental Language Learning or Teaching condition (typical, graded): If you need to speak to someone who does not know your language, you can learn that person's language or help that person to learn your language.

**Condition 30**

Opportunity for Analysis condition (necessary, graded): Learning a language involves an opportunity to analyse it, consciously or unconsciously, into its constituent parts.

**Condition 31**

Opportunity for Synthesis condition (necessary, graded): Learning a language involves an opportunity to learn how its constituent parts are recombining grammatically into larger units.

**Condition 32**

Opportunity for Contextual Embedding condition (necessary, graded): Learning a language involves an opportunity to learn how its elements are embedded in linguistic and non-linguistic contexts.

**Condition 33**

Opportunity for Matching condition (necessary, graded): Learning a language involves an opportunity for the learner to match his or her own knowledge with that of native speakers or other targets.

**Condition 34**

Opportunity for Remembering condition (necessary, graded): Learning a language involves an opportunity for new items to be remembered.

**Condition 35**

Opportunity for Practice condition (necessary, graded): Learning a language involves an opportunity for the new skills to be practiced; the result is fluency.

**Condition 36\*\*\*\*\***

Communication condition (typical of natural learning, graded): The language is being used for communication.

**Condition 37\*\*\*\*\***

Learning Goal condition (typical of formal learning, graded): The language is being used so that it can be learned.

**Condition 38**

Fluent Speakers condition (typical of natural learning, graded): Many speakers in the environment are fluent and native.

**Condition 39**

Open Area condition (typical of natural learning, graded): The learning takes place in the open or in unconstrained areas.

**Condition 40**

Comprehensible Input condition (typical of natural learning, graded): The learner is expected to understand; therefore the speaker makes an effort to see that language is comprehensible

**Condition 41**

Drill Input condition (typical of formal learning, graded): The learner is expected to learn; therefore ample practice is given to develop automatic control.

**Condition 42\*\*\*\*\***

Foreigner Talk condition (typical, graded): Conditions of speech addressed by native speakers to non-natives (foreigner talk) lead to notification in the structures and frequency of language that form the basis for input in natural learning situations.

**Condition 43\*\*\*\*\***

Formal Language Learning-Teaching condition (typical, graded): In formal language learning situations, multiple opportunities to observe and practise the new language can be provided. The more these match other relevant conditions (the learner, the goals, the situation), the more efficient the learning will be.

The conditions listed above have generally been stated informally. For a more precise statement of 74 conditions, see (Schauber and E. Spolsky 1986:22).

**7. LEARNER STRATEGIES FOR LEARNING AUTONOMY**

The term “**learner strategies**” refers to(1) language learning behaviors learners actually engage in to learn and regulate the learning of a second language; (2) what learners know about the strategies they use, i.e. their strategic knowledge; and finally what learners know about aspects of their language learning other than the strategies they use(Wenden and Rubin, 1987, p. 6-7).

**1. Theoretical Underpinnings and Assumptions**

- a. Some language learners are more successful than others.
- b. The learning process includes both explicit and implicit knowledge.
- c. Consciousness-raising is not incidental to learning(It is assumed that making learning decisions conscious can lead both poorer and better learners to improve the obtaining, storing, retrieving, and using of information, that is, can lead them to learn better)
- d. Successful strategies can be used to good effect by less effective learners.
- e. Teachers can promote strategy use.
- f. Once trained, students become the best judge of how to approach the learning task.
- g. Self-direction promotes learning both inside and outside the classroom.
- h. Language learning is like other kind of learning(It is best to build on what the student knows, or better still, to help students build on what they know)
- i. The success of learner training in other subjects is applicable to language learning.
- j. The”critical” faculty used by all humans in communicating is important in language learning.

## 2. Typology of Strategies

- a. Cognitive Learning Strategies(Clarification, Verification, Guessing, etc.)
- b. Metacognitive Learning Strategies(Planning, Monitoring, Evaluating)
- c. Communication Strategies (One's linguistic or communicative knowledge to remain in the conversation.
- d. Social Strategies(Those activities learners engage in which afford them opportunities to be exposed to and practice their knowledge)

## 8. HOW TO LEARN A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

### 1. Misconceptions about Language Studies

- a. Do I need a good memory? (Not necessary)
- b. Do I need a flair for languages (No, Unreliable)
- c. Aren't I too old for it? (No one is too old to learn)

### 2. How to Choose a Language Course

- a. No royal way(No short-cut): You have to be prepared to put time and energy into any serious pursuit if you wish to reap the benefits.
- b. The swimming pool analogy: Swimming is best learn in the element that it was invented for (in the water!)
- c. The issue of methods: Your brain has to be involved in an expression or exchange of ideas and emotions in a real context and not in a mechanical repetition of words and patterns.
- d. Class sizes and classroom arrangement: Five to twenty students are suitable for a wide variety of classroom activities.
- e. Number of contact hours: A realistic number for a non-intensive course may be somewhere around five or six hours a week, spread over at least two, preferably three or more occasions. Anything more than that can be regarded as an intensive course.
- f. CALL(Computer-Assisted Language Learning) System/Self-Access Center: The Role of Technology: This piece of technology allows students to work individually at their own pace and have as much exposure to the language as they wish without a teacher having to participate. Interactive video systems and computer softwares will play a significant role in the future of language teaching.
- g. Student attitudes-dos and don'ts in the classroom: It is essential that students cooperate with teachers in the classroom. Using a foreign language in the classroom is a game in a certain sense as it would make matters much easier if you all spoke in English.

### 3. Strategies for Self-Directed Learning

- a. Unlearn old habits: Language learning is a unique experience in that it requires you to shelve temporarily your mother tongue and start communicating through another language in which your skills are far less adequate to express your complex thoughts and emotions.
- b. Avoid a trap: Action vs Substitute Action: It is basic human nature to incline towards activities which one is good at, and shun others which may make one feel inadequate.

- c. How much time should one spend and on what? I would suggest that you spend at least five to six hours a week on private studies at home, preferably spread over several occasions, and - even more importantly - they spend this time on meaningful exercises.
- d. How to build vocabulary: Words, words, words! languages have so many words and we need to know them - Do not memorise words off a vocab list without hearing them or seeing them in a real context.
- e. Identify your weaknesses: It is important that you pinpoint the areas in your language skills that need extra attention and you have priorities attached to working towards certain goals.
- f. Raise your consciousness for language learning: You have to like what you do and do what you like. Think positively of what you are pursuing. Keep the goal in sight. Do not lose sight of your dreams.
- g. Go it alone. There is no reason why you can't learn a language on your own. It is a heavy undertaking, but a challenging and exciting one. You'll just have to pay extra attention to the problems of keeping up your incentive and getting your hands on good language materials. You'll also need to establish some contact with a native speaker. But when you work on your own, you know exactly why you're doing it. You can push yourself that much harder. You will be your own harshest critic - and that can make the rewards of success all the more satisfying.

## CONCLUSION

We still have to answer the following two questions: How is a second or foreign language acquired? How can we best use our classroom time to prepare our students to meet their communication needs in their second language? Learner strategy research is a merging together of these theoretical and practical concerns. It provides researchers with another learner characteristic to take into account in the equation of factors they may consider in determining how and with what degree of efficiency a second language is acquired. To practitioners or teachers of English like us, it presents the challenge of applying the insights gained from a systematic examination of learners' perception of their learning. Hence, it is an enterprise whose ultimate aim, i.e., an autonomous and effective language learner, depends on the collaboration of researchers, curriculum experts, material developers, classroom teachers, and learners. Moreover, there have been tremendous strides in defining the strategies which good language learners use and in placing these within a typology. What is needed now is experimentation with the complex array of strategies that will work best for different kinds of learners and a determination of the best approach for teachers to use in facilitating such strategy use. Finally, we Thai teachers have to be aware of the difficulties in applying those western second language acquisition theories to the Thai contexts; we may have to adopt, adapt, delete, or change the strategies completely in order to achieve our goals in teaching English or other second languages to Thai students in the Thai situations.