

Instructional Media

for

203 511

**Second Language Acquisition
M.A. (English Language Studies)**

Prepared by

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Week 1

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Second Language Acquisition

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Key issues in second language acquisition (SLA)

- What is SLA?
- Competence & Performance (Chomsky, 1965)
- Acquisition & Learning
- The role of L1
- The natural route of development
- Variability in language-learner language
- Individual learner differences
- The role of the input

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What is SLA?

- SLA & F(First)LA & F(Foreign)LA
- studies how learners learn an additional language after they have acquired their L1
- includes both naturalistic and tutored acquisition
- refers to all aspects of language that L2 learners acquire (syntax, morphology, phonology, pragmatic knowledge)

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Competence & Performance (Chomsky, 1965)

- Competence = a language learner's underlying knowledge of language
- Performance = the actual use of language in either comprehension or production
- SLA research is about performance. (To what extent competence can be inferred from performance?)

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Acquisition & Learning

- Acquisition = picking up a second language through exposure, natural language use, learners focus on meaning rather than form, subconscious
- Learning = the conscious study of a second language

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Second language acquisition = the subconscious and conscious processes by which a language other than the mother tongue is learnt in a natural or a tutored setting. It covers the development of phonology, lexis, grammar, and pragmatic knowledge.

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The role of the first language

- L1 similar to L2 aid L2 learning?
- L1 different from L2 interfere with L2 learning?
- Language transfer (negative, positive)
- Contrastive analysis hypothesis

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The 'natural' route of development

- Do L2 learners follow a universal route in acquiring a L2?
- Learners with different L1s would learn a L2 in different ways?
- L1 acquisition = follows a highly predictable route
- L2 = L1 hypothesis → Error analysis
→ Longitudinal studies

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Contextual variation in language-learner language

- Learner errors are not systematic.
- 2 types of contextual variation
 - ◆ Situational context
 - ◆ Linguistic context

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Individual learner differences

- Do 2 learners learn a L2 in exactly the same way?
- Factors that can influence the course of development are infinite. (age, aptitude, cognitive style, motivation, personality)

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Age

- Do adults learn L2 in the same way as children?
- Is there a 'natural' route for adults and a different one for children?
- The *rate* at which adults and children learn?

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Aptitude & Intelligence

- Aptitude (the special ability involved in language learning)
- Intelligence (the general ability that governs how well we master a whole range of skills, linguistic or non-linguistic)

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Motivation

- Instrumental motivation
- Integrative motivation
- Socioaffective filter
- Fossilization

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Personality & Cognitive Style

- What kind of personality is most successful in learning a L2?
- Extroverts VS Introverts

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The role of the input

- Learner access to L2 input → SLA take place
- Habit formation through practice and reinforcement → Importance of input
- Language acquisition device (Chomsky)
- Comprehensible input (Krashen)

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Learner strategies (Tarone, 1980)

- Learning strategies
- Production strategies
- Communication strategies
- Can we observe learner strategies?

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The role of formal instruction

- Effects on the route of learning
- Effects on the rate of learning

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Week 2

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First Language Acquisition

- Analogies between FLA and SLA
- Theories of FLA
- Issues in first language acquisition

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Theories of First language acquisition

- Behavioristic approaches
 - ◆ Theory of verbal behavior
 - ◆ Mediation theory
 - ◆ Jenkins & Palermo's theory
- The Nativist approach
- Functional approaches

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Theory of verbal behavior (B.F. Skinner)

- Effective language behavior = the production of correct responses to stimuli
- Operant conditioning = conditioning in which a human being emits a response
- Operant = a sentence or utterance
- Operant is maintained by reinforcement (a positive verbal or nonverbal from another person).

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The Nativist Approach

- Language acquisition is innately determined, that we are born with a genetic capacity that predisposes us to a systematic perception of language around us, resulting in the construction of an internalized system of language.

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Language acquisition device (LAD)

- the ability to distinguish speech sounds from other sounds in the environment
- the ability to organize linguistic events into various classes which can later be refined
- the knowledge that only a certain kind of linguistic system is possible and that other kinds are not
- the ability to engage in constant evaluation of the developing linguistic system so as to construct the simplest possible system out of the available linguistic input

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Universal grammar

- all human beings are genetically equipped with abilities that enable them to acquire language
- UG research attempts to discover what it is that all children, regardless of their environmental stimuli bring to the language acquisition process.

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Functional Approaches

- The generative rules proposed by the nativists dealt with the forms of language and not with the deeper functional levels of meaning constructed from social interaction.
- "Mommy socks"

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Competence & Performance

- competence = one's underlying knowledge of the system of a language -its rules of grammar, vocabulary, all the pieces of a language and how those pieces fit together
- Production = actual production (speaking, writing) or the comprehension (listening, reading) of linguistic events

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Competence

- an "idealized" speaker-hearer who does not display such performance variables as memory limitations, distractions, shifts of attention and interest, errors, and hesitation phenomena such as repeats, false starts, pauses, omissions, and additions

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Comprehension & Production

- Comprehension (listening, reading)
- Production (speaking, writing)
- Research shows the superiority of comprehension over production.
- Adults understand more vocabulary than they ever use in speech and also perceive more syntactic variation than they actually produce.

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Nature or Nurture?

- What are those behaviors that "nature" provides innately, in some sort of predetermined biological timetable?]
- What are those behaviors that are, by environmental exposure -by "nurture," by teaching—learned and internalized?

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Universals

- Language is universally acquired in the same manner, and moreover, the deep structure of language at its deepest level may be common to all languages.

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Systematicity and Variability

- Systematicity of the process of acquisition
- Variability in the process of learning

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Language and Thought

- Language affects thought??
 - ◆ Sapir-Whorf hypothesis of linguistic relativity (each language imposes on its speaker a particular "world-view.")
- Thought affects language??

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Imitation

- Surface-structure imitation
- Deep-structure imitation

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Practice

- A behavioristic model of FLA : Practice (repetition and association) is the key to the formation of habits by operant conditioning.
- The frequency of occurrence of a linguistic item in the speech of mothers was an overwhelmingly strong predictor of the order of emergence of those items in their children's speech. (meaningful occurrence)

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Communicative Competence

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Communicative language teaching

- teach second languages for the ultimate goal of communication with other speakers of the second languages
- focus on speaking and listening skills, on writing for specific communicative purposes, and on 'authentic' reading texts.

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Communicative competence

- competence that enables us to convey and interpret messages and to negotiate meanings interpersonally within specific contexts
- knowledge that enables a person to communicate functionally and interactively

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Linguistic competence

- knowledge about language forms

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Cummins (1979)

- Cognitive/academic language proficiency (CALP)
- Basic interpersonal communicative skills (BICS)

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CALP

- the dimension of proficiency in which the learner manipulates or reflects upon the surface features of language outside of the immediate interpersonal context → context-reduced communication (classroom, school-oriented language)

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BICS

- the communicative capacity that all children acquire in order to be able to function in daily interpersonal exchanges → context-embedded communication (face-to-face communication)

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Communicative competence

- Grammatical competence
- Discourse competence
- Sociolinguistic competence
- Strategic competence

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Grammatical competence

- knowledge of lexical items and of rules of morphology, syntax, sentence-grammar semantics, and phonology

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Discourse competence

- ability to connect sentences in stretches of discourse and to form a meaningful series of utterances

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Sociolinguistic competence

- the knowledge of the sociocultural rules of language and of discourse → the appropriateness of a particular utterance)

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Strategic competence

- the competence underlying our ability to make repairs, to cope with imperfect knowledge, and to sustain communication through 'paraphrase, circumlocution, repetition, hesitation, avoidance, and guessing, shifts in register and style
- the way we manipulate language to meet communicative goals

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Pragmatic competence

- influences language production and interpretation → makes SLA difficult task because of cross-cultural contrasts
- American: What an unusual necklace. It's beautiful.
Samoan: Please take it.
- the way we manipulate language to meet communicative goals

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Functions of language (Halliday)

- Instrumental function
- Regulatory function
- Representational function
- Interactional function
- Personal function
- Heuristic function
- Imaginative function

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Discourse analysis

- The analysis of the functions of language
- A single sentence can hardly be analyzed without considering its context.
- Without the intersentential relationships of discourse, it would be difficult to communicate unambiguously with one another.

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Rules of conversation

- attention getting
- topic nomination

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Conversational maxims (Grice) or Rules of communicative competence

- quantity
- quality
- relevance
- manner

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Speech styles (Joos)

- **Criterion of formality**
 - ◆ **oratorical**
 - ◆ **deliberative or formal**
 - ◆ **consultative**
 - ◆ **casual**
 - ◆ **intimate**

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Characteristics of Communicative language teaching

- **Goals**
- **Language techniques**
- **Fluency and accuracy**
- **Classroom use language productively, receptively in unrehearsed contexts**

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Individual learners differences and SLA

- Personal factors
 - ◆ Group dynamics
 - ◆ Attitudes to the teacher and course materials
 - ◆ Individual learning techniques
- General factors
 - ◆ Age
 - ◆ Intelligence and aptitude
 - ◆ Cognitive style
 - ◆ Attitudes and motivation
 - ◆ Personality

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The influence of individual learner factors on SLA

- Differences in age, learning style, aptitude, motivation, and personality result in differences in the **route** along which learners pass in SLA.
- Factors influence only the **rate** and ultimate success of SLA.

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Group dynamics

- Anxiety and competitiveness impair or enhance SLA?

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Individual learning techniques

- Involved in studying L2
 - ◆ Preparing and memorizing vocabulary lists
 - ◆ Learning words in context
 - ◆ Practicing vocabulary
- Involved in obtaining L2 input
 - ◆ concerns the ways in which the learner gets into contact with the L2

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Age

- Route of SLA
 - ◆ Age does not alter the route of acquisition.
 - ◆ Child, adolescents, and adult learners go through the same stages; learners appear to process linguistic data in the same way, irrespective of how old they are.

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Rate or success of SLA

- Where rate is concerned, there is evidence to suggest that older learners are better.
- The learners who progress most rapidly may be adolescents (12-15 years).
- Age was a factor only when it came to morphology and syntax.
- The longer the exposure to the L2, the more native-like L2 proficiency becomes.

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Rate (continued)

- The influence of the age of the learner seems to outweigh the length of the learning period, at least on listening and reading tests.
- Although number of years of exposure to the L2 leads to greater success, this may be restricted to overall communicative ability, rather than to grammatical or phonological accuracy.
- the age of arrival <> pronunciation

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Explaining the effects of age

- The critical period hypothesis
- Cognitive explanations
- Affective explanations

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The critical period hypothesis

- The optimum age for language acquisition falls within the first ten years of life.
- During this period the brain retains plasticity, but with the onset of puberty this plasticity begins to disappear.
- Supported by Lenneberg (1967).

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Cognitive explanations

- Adults = learn linguistic rules → apply these rules when they use the language
- Young child → responds not so much to what language is as to what it does
- Why is there no advantage in pronunciation in adolescent learner?
- Why do adolescents outperform adults?

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Affective explanations

- Brown (1980): stages of acculturation
 - ◆ initial excitement, culture shock, culture stress, assimilation or adaptation to the new culture
- Neufeld (1978)
 - ◆ Primary = a reasonably large functional vocabulary, basic mastery of pronunciation and grammatical rules
 - ◆ Secondary = the ability to handle complex grammatical structures and different language styles

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Intelligence

- a hypothesized 'general factor' which underlies our ability to master and use a whole range of academic skills

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2 kinds of language ability

- Cognitive/academic language ability (CALP) = dimension of language proficiency which is strongly related to overall cognitive and academic skills = intelligence
- Basic interpersonal communication skills (BICS) = skills required for oral fluency and also include sociolinguistic aspects of competence = aptitude

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Aptitude

- phonetic coding ability (ability to perceive and memorize new sounds)
- grammatical sensitivity (the individual's ability to demonstrate awareness of the syntactical patterning of sentences of a language)
- inductive ability (ability to notice and identify similarities and differences in both grammatical form and meaning)

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Cognitive style

the manner in which people perceive, conceptualize, organize, and recall information

- Field independence/dependence
- Analytic/Holistic
- Data gatherers/rule formers

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Attitudes and motivation

- **Attitudes**
 - ◆ attitudes toward the community and people who speak the L2
 - ◆ attitudes towards learning the language concerned a
 - ◆ attitudes towards languages and language learning in general

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Motivation

- **Motivation (Brown, 1981)**
 - ◆ Global motivation
 - ◆ Situational motivation
 - ◆ Task motivation
- **Gardner & Lambert**
 - ◆ Integrative motivation
 - ◆ Instrumental motivation

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Personality

- extroversion/introversion
- social skills
- inhibition

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Week 9

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Styles and strategies

Focus: cognitive variations in learning a second language: variations in learning styles that differ across individuals, and in strategies employed by individuals to attack particular problems in particular contexts

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Process

- characteristics of every human being e.g. transfer in the process of learning and retention

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Style

- general characteristics that differentiate you from someone else e.g. more visually oriented, more tolerant of ambiguity

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Strategy

- methods of approaching a problem or task

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Learning styles

- cognitive, affective, and physiological traits that are relatively stable indicators of how learners perceive, interact with and respond to the learning environment

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Field independence

- your ability to perceive a particular, relevant item or factor in a 'field' of distracting items: democratic, industrialized, competitive society → independent, competitive, self-confident → in SLL (related to classroom learning, attention to details, mastering of exercises, drills)

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Field dependence

- the tendency to be 'dependent' on the total field so that the parts embedded within the field are not easily perceived though that total field is perceived more clearly as a unified whole
methods of approaching a problem or task

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Left-and Right-brain functioning

- Left hemisphere: logical, analytical thought, with mathematical and linear processing of information
- Right hemisphere: perceives and remembers visual, tactile, and auditory images

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Ambiguity tolerance

- the degree you are cognitively willing to tolerate ideas and propositions that run counter to your own belief system or structure of knowledge

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Reflectivity and impulsivity

- Reflective children : make fewer errors in reading : slower but more accurate, weak performance on a proofreading task
- Impulsive children : faster readers, benefit more from inductive learning situations

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- Visual and Auditory styles
- Strategies
- Learning Strategies

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Models of learner strategy training

- as part of a standard communicative methodology
- Teachers can embed actual strategy practice into their techniques and materials.
- Certain compensatory techniques are practiced to help students overcome certain weaknesses.
- Textbooks can include strategy training as part of a content-centered approach.

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