

Second
Language
Acquisition by
Rod Ellis

Summary of the Book

Chapter 1: Describing and Explaining L2 Acquisition

- Systematic study of Second Language Acquisition is a recent field of study (since 1970s)
- Goals of SLA
- Case studies: Wes, and J&R
- Possible explanations: Mentalist explanations versus External Factors

Chapter 2: The Nature of Learner Language

- Study of Error Analysis
- The difference between errors and mistakes
- Explaining errors: avoidance, overgeneralization, transfer
- Developmental Patterns
 - Silent Period
 - The Order of Acquisition
 - U-Shaped Development/restructuring
- * Variability
- * Fossilization

Chapter 3: Interlanguage

- Behaviorist Learning Theory
- A Mentalist Theory of Learning Language
- Interlanguage
 - Learners are not just making errors at random, they have their own abstract rules for their language
 - However Interlanguage rules permeable
- Computational Model
 - Input→Intake→L2 Knowledge→Output

Chapter 4: Social Aspects of Interlanguage

- Careful Speech Versus Careless Speech
- Theory of Accommodation→people start to make their speech similar to their social group
- Acculturation Model
- Social Identity
- Investment

Chapter 5: Discourse Aspects of Interlanguage

- Discourse rules → e.g. reacting to compliments
- Negotiation of meaning → Interaction Hypothesis
- Vygotsky → Zone of Proximal Development, scaffolding

Chapter 6: Psycholinguistic Aspects of Interlanguage

- L1 Transfer
 - Contrastive Analysis: popular in the heyday of behaviorism
 - After behaviorism fell out of favor, mentalist explanations downplayed the role of L1 Transfer
 - Then reconceptualized transfer within a cognitive framework
- Role of Consciousness
 - Noticing
 - Explicit versus Implicit knowledge
- Processing Constraints

Chapter 7: Linguistic Aspects of Interlanguage

- Universal Grammar
 - Humans have a biological endowment for learning languages separate from other cognitive functions
 - Poverty of the Stimulus: Children can't possibly learn language from input because the input doesn't contain all the necessary information
 - Critical Period Hypothesis: UG is only available in childhood→adults can't learn second language through UG
- Access to UG for L2 Learners: Theories
 - Complete Access
 - No Access
 - Partial Access
 - Dual Access

Chapter 8: Individual Differences in L2 Acquisition

- Language Aptitude
 - Phonemic Coding Ability
 - Grammatical Sensitivity
 - Inductive Language Learning Ability
 - Rote Learning Ability
- Motivation
 - Instrumental Motivation
 - Integrative Motivation
 - Resultative Motivation
 - Intrinsic Motivation
- Learning Strategies

Chapter 9: Instruction and L2 Acquisition

- Does Form-Focused Instruction Work
 - It can't alter the Natural Order of Acquisition
 - But it can help the students through the stages faster
- What Kinds of Form-Focused Instruction Work Best?

Chapter 10: Multiple Perspectives in SLA

- One theory or several?

What did I
miss?