



Psycholinguistics

Lecture 7

By Dr. Chelli

Introduction to second language acquisition

Lecture Objectives

This lecture helps students to understand

- second language theories
- and how second language is processed.



Introduction

Second language acquisition (SLA) involves a wide range of language learning settings and learners characteristics and circumstances (Troike, 2016, p. 5). Different approaches to the study of SLA have developed from different disciplinary perspectives including the linguistic, psychological and social ones. They attempted to answer three basic questions: What exactly does the L2 learner come to know? How does the learner acquire this knowlege? And why are some learners more (or less) successful than others? (Troike, 2016, p. 5). This lecture will present an overview of some of the theories and models developed in the field of SLA as well as the processes involved in learning a second language.




What is second language acquisition?


- ❑ Second language acquisition (SLA) refers to both the study of individuals and groups who are learning a language subsequently to learning their first language as young children, and to the process of learning that language.
- ❑ The additional language is called second language (L2), even though it may actually be the third, fourth, or tenth to be acquired.
- ❑ It is also commonly called a target language (TL), which refers to any language that is the aim or goal of learning (Troike, 2006, p.2).

Scope of Second Language Acquisition

The scope of SLA includes:

- Informal L2 learning that takes place in naturalistic contexts (a subconscious process which occurs very naturally in a non-threatening environment)
- Formal L2 learning that takes place in classrooms.
- L2 learning that involves a mixture of these settings and circumstances.

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- There are no simple answers to the questions posed previously and not a common agreement about them because in part, SLA is highly complex in nature, and in part because scholars in the field come from academic disciplines which differ greatly in theory and research methods. In spite of the development of the disciplinary approach to studying SLA, many mysteries remain (Troike,2006).



SLA has emerged as a field of study primarily within linguistics and psychology to answer the what, how and why of the previous questions. There are corresponding differences in what is emphasized by researchers who come from each of these fields:

- **Linguists** emphasize the characteristics of the differences and similarities in the languages that are being learned, and the **linguistic competence** (underlying knowledge) and **linguistic performance** (actual production) of learners at various stages of acquisition.


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- **Psychologists and psycholinguists** emphasize the mental process involved in acquisition, and the representation of language (s) in the brain.
 - **Sociolinguists** emphasize variability in learner linguistic performance, and they extend the scope of the study to communicative competence (underlying knowledge that additionally for language use, or **pragmatic competence**).
 - **Social psychologists** emphasize group-related phenomena, such as **identity and social motivation, and the interactional and larger social context of learning** (Troike, 2006, p.3)



In sum,

- **Linguistic** frameworks differ in taking an internal or external focus on language
 - **Psychological** frameworks differ in whether they focus on languages and the brain, on learning processes, or on individual differences;
 - **Social** frameworks differ in placing their emphasis on micro or macro factors in learning.
- * All of these complement each other in order to understand the multidimensional processes involved in SLA.

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- Additionally, SLA is concerned with the nature of the hypotheses (whether conscious or unconscious) that learners come up with regarding the rules of the second language. Are the rules like those of the native language? Are they like the rules of the language being learned? Are there pattern that are common to all learners regardless of the native language and regardless of the language being learned? Do the rules created by second language learners vary according to the context of rules...
 - Given these varied questions, the study of SLA draws not only from linguistics, psychology, psycholinguistics and sociology, but also from discourse analysis, conversational analysis and education, to name a few (Gass and Selinker, 2008).



This is why, there are numerous approaches from which to examine second language data, each of which brings to the study of SLA its goal, its own data-collection methods and its own analytical tools.

Theories of Second Language Acquisition (SLA)

- Behaviorism
 - Skinner
 - Habit formation (stimulus and response; positive reinforcement)
- Innatist perspective
 - Chomsky
 - Universal Grammar; Language Acquisition Device
 - Krashen's Hypotheses
- Cognitive/Developmental Perspective (Psychological Theories)
 - Interaction
 - Input processing
- Sociocultural Perspective
 - Vygotsky
 - Zone of Proximal Development (ZDP)

Theories and Models of SLA



INNATIST

(Krashen)

- **Subconscious acquisition superior to “learning” & “monitoring”**
- **Comprehensible input (i+1)**
- **Low affective filter**
- **Natural order of acquisition**
- **“zero option” for grammar instruction**

COGNITIVE

(McLaughlin/Bialystok)

- **Controlled/ automatic processing (McL)**
- **Focal/peripheral attention (McL)**
- **Restructuring (McL)**
- **Implicit vs. explicit (B)**
- **Unanalyzed vs. analyzed knowledge (B)**
- **Form-focused instruction**

CONSTRUCTIVIST

(Long)

- **Interaction hypothesis**
- **Intake through social interaction**
- **Output hypothesis (Swain)**
- **HIGs (Seliger)**
- **Authenticity**
- **Task-based instruction**


Innatist model: Krashen's input hypothesis

Krashen (1982) proposed 5

Interrelated hypotheses:

- ❑ Acquisition-learning hypothesis
- ❑ Monitor hypothesis
- ❑ Natural order hypothesis
- ❑ Input hypothesis
- ❑ Affective filter hypothesis






1. The acquisition-learning theory: We have two different ways of developing ability in another language: We can acquire language and we can learn language.


*Language acquisition occurs **subconsciously**.


*Learning a language is a **conscious process**.

*Error correction is supposed to help learning. When we make a mistake and are corrected, we are supposed to change our conscious version of a certain rule.


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- ❑ Fluency in second language performance is due to what we have acquired, not what we have learned.
 - ❑ Our conscious learning processes and our subconscious acquisition processes are mutually exclusive: learning cannot be acquisition.
 - ❑ In sum, this theory claims that acquired language results in fluent communication.

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- 2. The natural order hypothesis:** We acquire (not learn) the parts of a language in a predictable order. Some grammatical items, for example are learned early while others are acquired later.
- 3. The monitor hypothesis:** A consciously learned language is only available to us as a monitor, or editor. The ability to produce language fluently and easily comes from what we have acquired. The grammar rules we learned at school have only one function: They act as a monitor, or editor.
- The monitor is a kind of fundamental grammatical editing function that regulates or alters the way that a person uses a second language verbally.

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- It is involved in learning, not in acquisition. It is a device for ‘ watchdogging’ one’s output for editing and making alterations or corrections as they are consciously perceived



4. The comprehension hypothesis/ The input hypothesis: We acquire language when we understand messages that contain aspects of language (vocabulary/ grammar) we have not yet acquired, but we are ready to acquire; that is, we understand language we hear or read when we receive comprehensible input (Krashen, 2003).

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- The idea that humans acquire language in only one way- by understanding messages or by receiving comprehensible input (Krashen, 1985). The $i+1$ formula symbolizes how comprehensible input works: messages in the language must make sense, just beyond the competence of the learner, who must strain a bit cognitively to understand.

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5. Affective filter hypothesis: affective variables prevent input from reaching language device(Krashen, 2013).

Krashen's Affective Filter

A learner's feelings/emotions (stress, anxiety, boredom) may block language input into the brain.

Think – *Classroom Environment!*

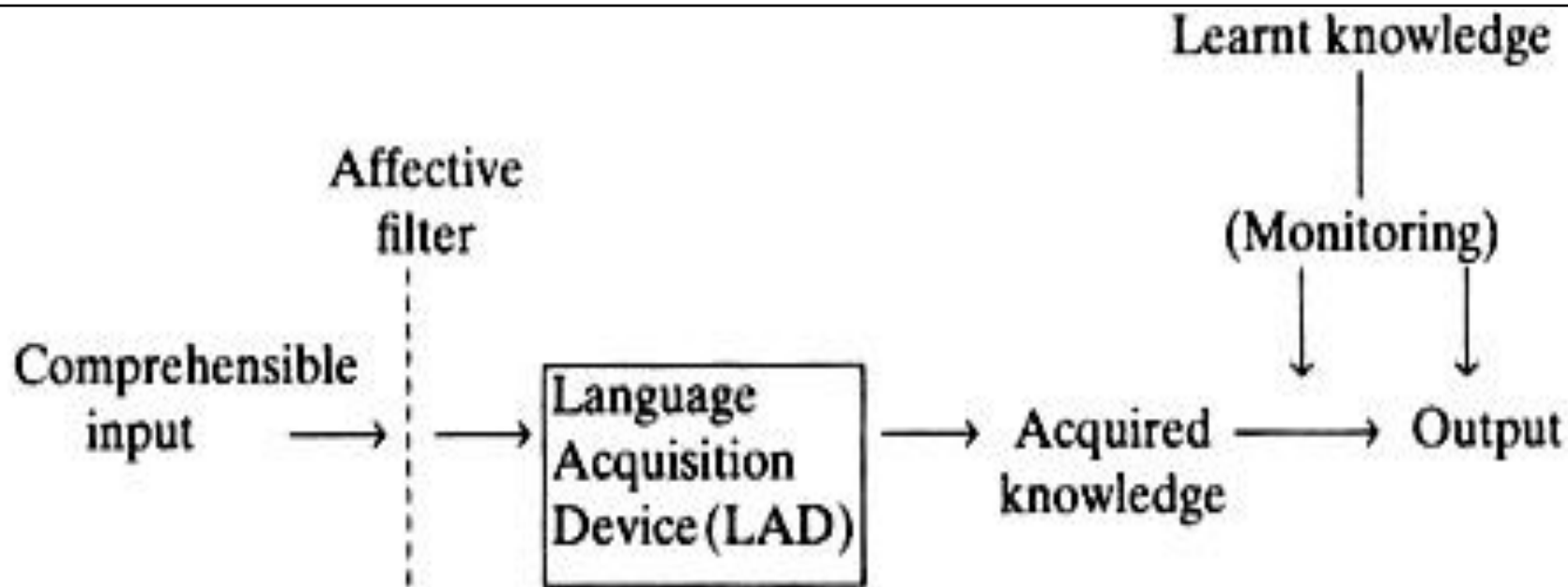


The Affective Filter Hypothesis



The learner's emotional state can act as a filter that impedes or blocks input necessary for language acquisition.

Assignment 1: Can you explain this diagram?



The Input Hypothesis Model of L2 learning and production (adapted from Krashen, 1982, pp. 16 and 32; and Gregg, 1984)

Cognitive theories: Information processing models:

Information processing models:

Central assumption:

- The mind is a general-purpose symbol-processing system
- The mind is limited capacity processor
- The mind as a slow computer with limited RAM.

Refined model

- Conscious tasks require attention
- Attention is limited (memory, processing power)
- Automatic processes no longer require resources for other conscious tasks.

Cognitive model: Mc Laughlin's Attention processing model

McLaughlin's Information Processing Model

Main characteristics
of McLaughlin's
Information
Processing Model

Human are autonomous and active

The mind is a general purpose symbol processing system

Complex behaviour is composed of simple modular (i.e. self contained) processes

Component processes can be isolated and studied independently of other process

Processes take time, therefore predictions about reaction time can be made.




According to the processing approach:

- You learn the rules (explicitly?)
- You practise them over and over and eventually, they become automatic.

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- McLaughlin argues that learning an L2 involves moving from controlled to automatic processing via practice.
 - In order to learn a second language, which is viewed as a complex cognitive skill, various aspects of the task must be practised and integrated in fluent performance. Therefore, this requires, the automatization of sub-skills.
 - As performance improves, there is a constant restructuring as learners simplify, unify and gain an increasing control over the internal representations. These notions- automatization and restructuring are central to cognitive theory (McLaughlin, 1987, pp133-134)

Attention to formal properties of language	Information processing	
	Controlled	Automatic
Focal	(cell A) Performance based on formal rule learning	(cell B) Performance in a test situation
Peripheral	(cell C) performance based on implicit learning or analogic learning	(Cell D) performance in communication situations

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- Conscious- controlled- processing puts lots demands on the learners cognitive skills and the short-term memory, which limits what can be consciously learned. Even a very simple sentence requires a lot of controlled processing by early learners.
 - But eventually, such simple sentences can be said or written automatically, leaving room for for new structures to be consciously processed, because they can be accessed rapidly as they are stored in the long-term memory.

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- This means that a learner's interlanguage is being restructured as items move from the short-term memory to the long-term memory. However, if some of them move earlier, this can lead to fossilization of errors.

A socioconstructivist model: Long's interaction hypothesis

Interaction

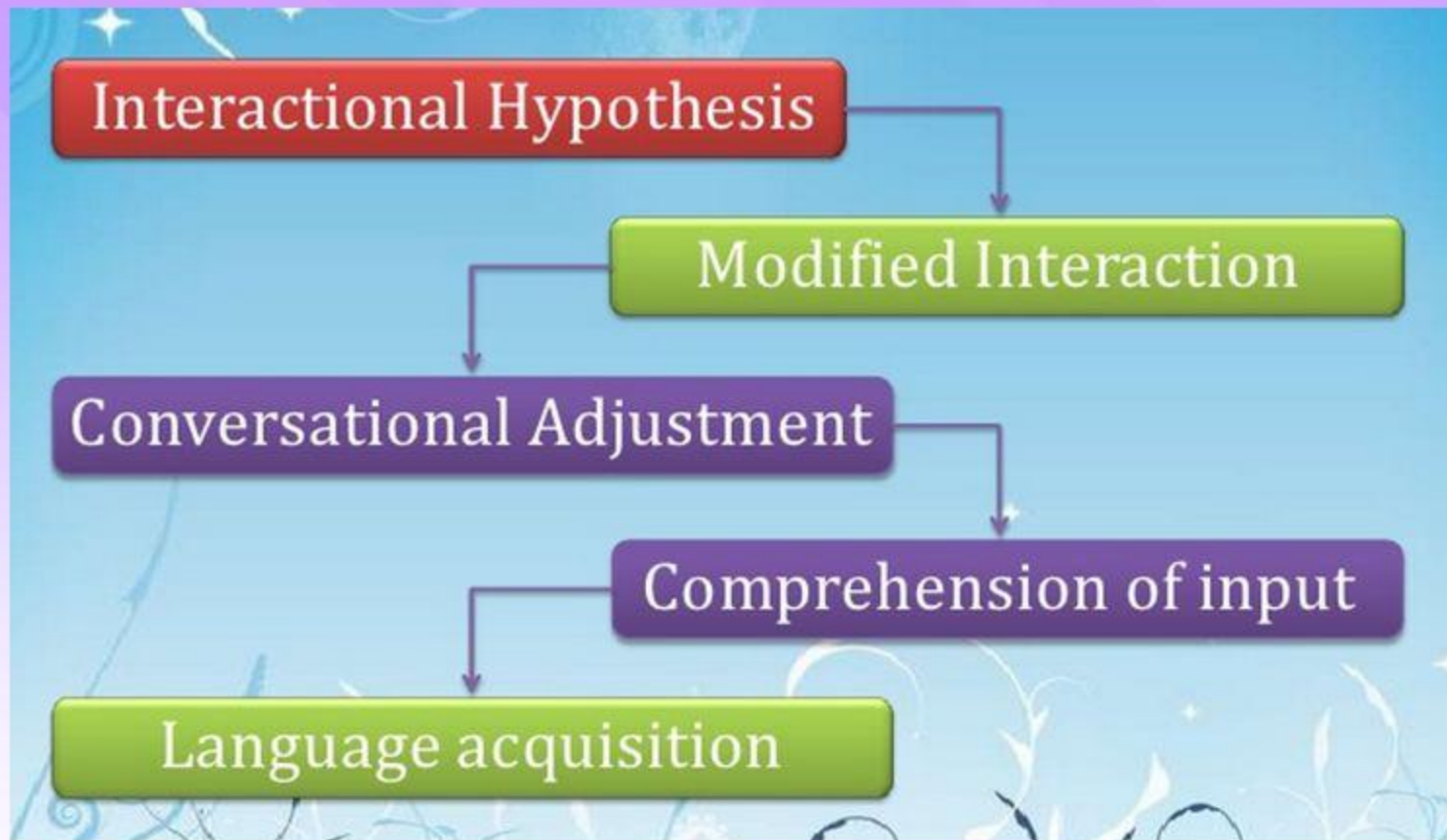


- According to Long's interaction hypothesis the conditions for acquisition are especially good when interacting in the second language.
- Conditions are good when a breakdown in communication occurs and learners must negotiate for meaning.
- The modifications to speech arising from interactions like this help make input more comprehensible, provide feedback to the learner, and push learners to modify their speech.

The Interaction Hypothesis

- SLA takes place through **conversational interaction**.
- Long (1983) argued that **modified interaction** is the necessary mechanism for making language comprehensible.
- What learners need is not necessarily simplification of the linguistic forms but rather **an opportunity to interact** with other speakers, **working together to reach mutual comprehension**.
- Research shows that native speakers consistently **modify their speech** in sustained conversation with non-native speakers.

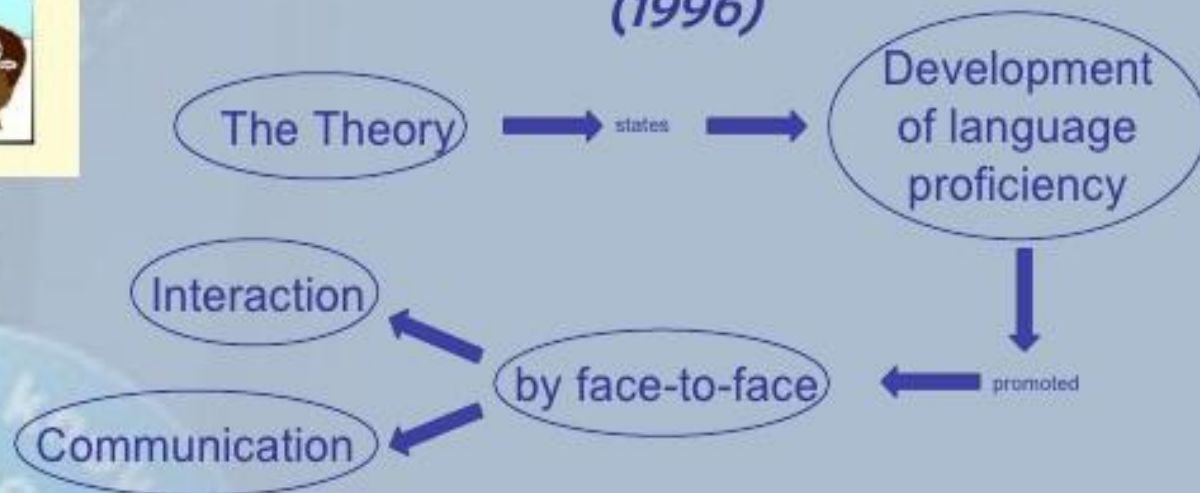
How it works



Interaction Hypothesis

(1996)

Interaction hypothesis



Interaction Hypothesis

Strong Form



Interaction itself contributes to language development.

Weak Form



Interaction is the way that learners find learning opportunities, whether or not they make productive use of them.

Stages of Second-Language Development

- ① *First stage.* The child uses her home language to try to communicate.
- ② *Second stage.* The child figures out that he is not successful using the home language with English speakers, so he passes through a period of observation and listening.
- ③ *Third stage.* The child attempts to use English in a more abbreviated form through the use of one-word sentences or phrases.
- ④ *Fourth stage.* The young child begins to use more elaborated phrases and short sentences to communicate in English.

Figure 2.1
Stages of Second Language Acquisition

Stage	Characteristics	Approximate Time Frame	Teacher Prompts
<i>Preproduction</i>	The student <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has minimal comprehension • Does not verbalize • Nods "Yes" and "No" • Draws and points 	0–6 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Show me . . . • Circle the . . . • Where is . . . ? • Who has . . . ?
<i>Early Production</i>	The student <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has limited comprehension • Produces one- or two-word responses • Participates using key words and familiar phrases • Uses present-tense verbs 	6 months–1 year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes/no questions • Either/or questions • One- or two-word answers • Lists • Labels
<i>Speech Emergence</i>	The student <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has good comprehension • Can produce simple sentences • Makes grammar and pronunciation errors • Frequently misunderstands jokes 	1–3 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why . . . ? • How . . . ? • Explain . . . • Phrase or short-sentence answers
<i>Intermediate Fluency</i>	The student <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has excellent comprehension • Makes few grammatical errors 	3–5 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What would happen if . . . ? • Why do you think . . . ?
<i>Advanced Fluency</i>	The student has a near-native level of speech.	5–7 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decide if . . . • Retell . . .

Source: Adapted from Krashen and Terrell (1983).

Age of Acquisition

- The relationship between a learner's **age** and his/her potential for success in second language learning is **complex** or **controversial**.
- The relationship needs to take into account
 - 1) **the learner's cognitive development**
 - 2) **the learner's motivation**
 - 3) **the learner's goal for learning L2** (i.e., in what aspects of the L2 the learner has achieved)
 - 4) **the contexts in which the learner learns L2** (including quantity & quality of language input, learning environment, learning time, and socio-cultural contexts)

Factors that affect second Language acquisition

- Motivation
- Age
- Access to the language
- Personality
- First language development
- Quality of instruction
- Cognitive ability



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