

# Restatement of the Fourth Chapter: “Learner Language”

based on *How Languages are Learned*

by P.M. Lightbown and N. Spada

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## Introduction

Chapter 4 mainly deals with second language (L2) learners’ understanding, skills, and use of their new language. For that reason, it is first necessary to survey some learners’ errors from their knowledge of the target language influence, and to analyze their capacity to apply this knowledge to the target language.

Second, chapter 4 details the stages and sequences in the acquisition of morphology and syntax in the second language, and then proceeds to focus on learning the key elements of communicative competence : vocabulary, pragmatics, and pronunciation.

I would like to make a clear and detailed restatement on vocabulary, pragmatics and phonology as part of communicative competence. These three items are very closely associated with communicative competence, and one of the functions of language learning is to develop communicative competence. Second language teaching seeks to improve meaningful communication and facilitate language use in classroom activities. Also, I am going to modify, but use, some of Chapter 4’s headings as follows :

### **(A) Studying the Language of Second Language (L2) Learners**

- (a) Contrastive analysis      (b) Error analysis
- (c) Interlanguage          (d) Analyzing learner language

### **(B) Developmental Sequences**

- (a) Grammatical morphemes      (b) Negation      (c) Questions
- (d) Possessive determiners      (e) Relative clauses
- (f) Reference to past      (g) Movement through developmental sequences (stages)

### **(C) More about First Language Influence**

### **(D) Communicative Competence**

- (a) Vocabulary      (b) Pragmatics      (c) Phonology

## (A) Studying the Language of Second Language (L2) Learners

Teachers need to become aware, through observation, how learners will gradually try to develop and acquire skills and abilities in their new language. Then, teachers will find it easier to analyze and evaluate teaching methods, considering that they can then reasonably expect to achieve their goals in the classroom.

Some typical features of learner language can be quite hard to understand if people do not have the whole idea of the learners' stages in gaining important knowledge of the second language. For that reason, we need to plan and investigate a series of steps and systems on the observable use of spontaneous language. It is also necessary to carry out these procedures. The new sentences that second language learners produce appear to be caused by mental processes and prior knowledge that affect the language they hear around them. Both first and second language acquisition is rightly described, by the authors (p.78), as "...developing systems with their own evolving rules and patterns, not as imperfect versions of the target language."

To date, researchers have looked into some issues such as developmental sequences for second language acquisition, first language influence on the second-language acquisition, and different environments between learners. So, we will deal with them in the next section.

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(a) Contrastive analysis (b) Error analysis (c) Interlanguage

Here we discuss the three items above in order to analyze the second language learner's native tongue. Contrastive analysis compares the linguistic systems of two languages, for example the sound or grammatical systems. This type of analysis was developed and practiced in the 1950s and 1960s, making use of American structural linguistics for language teaching. This is based on language transfer and predicted error. Teaching materials can use this analysis to minimize the effects of interference, to predict learning difficulties, and to correct the errors of second language learners. However, in the 1970s this analysis fell out of use because interference was replaced by other versions of learning difficulties (error analysis and interlanguage). In my view, however, this was more effective for speech sounds or phonology, which we will discuss in other aspects of language later.

Error analysis is the analysis and study of the errors of second language learners that are not due to the learners' mother tongue but demonstrate general learning strategies. By the late 1970s, error analysis had been taken over by studies of interlanguage and second language acquisition.

Larry Selinker (1972) identified interlanguage as "learners' developing second-language knowledge." Selinker introduced the term "fossilization" to show that some features in a learner's language may stop changing. Some important linguistic aspects of second language

learning (such as speech sounds and grammatical morphemes) can level off, progress becoming firmly fixed without changing for the better in the future. Consequently, some or most L2 learners will be unable to reach the target language; that is, they stop learning or improving when their mental rule system contains rules different from those of the target language. Fossilization can also be regarded as a cognitive process, by which new learning is disrupted by existing learning. That means a complete stop of learning (R. Ellis 2008). In contrast with fossilization, stabilization is connected to a state of L2 development where fluctuation or variation has temporarily ceased. A lot of L2 learners appear to reach a plateau temporarily in spite of their continuing efforts to develop before interlanguage stimulates further progress, but then they make a "breakthrough" (success) some time later (R. Ellis 2008). In my view, stabilization is a stage in the process of learning a language toward moving extremely close to the target language in L2 acquisition.

#### (d) Analyzing learner language

This section proceeds to examine the nature of two learners of English (French student and Chinese adult). By using error analysis, the authors, Lightbown and Spada, point out transfer or interference errors: so-called interlingual errors which result from language transfer caused by the learner's native language. Both preposition choice (French student) and some word order patterns (Chinese adult) are described here in the text.

Another category is intralingual error which results from faulty or

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partial learning of the target language. This exists in learners' language showing their transitional competence and is the result of learning processes such as overgeneralization, simplifications, developmental errors, and avoidance. Several errors that the two learners made are classified and described.

Errors analysis has the good point of showing what learners actually do. However, it is very hard to determine the precise source of the error. Avoidance strategy in particular may be a part of the systematic L2 performance, leaving analysts without information about learners' developing interlanguage. The analysts find it difficult to interpret the absence of particular errors. Therefore, efforts to define such categories have been full of problems owing to the difficulty of identifying the cause of errors. Error analysis has been replaced by studies of interlanguage in second language acquisition.

## (B) Developmental Sequences

One of the main conclusions of L2 research is that learners pass through a series of stages recognized in acquiring specific grammatical forms and structures, such as negations, interrogatives (questions), and relative clauses.

### (a) Grammatical morphemes

A morpheme is the smallest meaningful unit in a language and cannot be divided without altering or destroying its meaning. For example, the English word "unkindness" consists of three morphemes:

the negative prefix "un," the adjective "kind," and the noun-forming suffix "-ness." Morphemes can have grammatical functions. Grammatical morphemes usually refer to smaller units that are added to words to alter their meanings (for example, the *-s* in *books* shows plurals) or function words (for example, *the*) which are ordinarily attached to another word. Grammatical functions, for example are the *-s* in "she talks" shows that the verb is in the third person singular present tense.

When researchers try to examine each learner's speech, they pinpoint the obligatory contexts for each morpheme, that is, the places in a sentence where the morpheme is necessary to make the sentence grammatically correct.

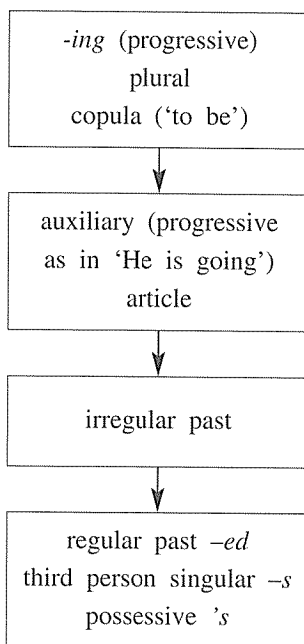
$$\frac{\text{Total number of obligatory contexts}}{\text{The number of correctly supplied morphemes}} = \text{percentage occupancy}$$

e.g., Yesterday I play baseball for two hours       $1/2 = 50\%$

Some linguistic items, forms, and rules seem to be consistently produced with higher accuracy than others by language learners, permitting such items to be ordered with their relative difficulty.

Stephen Krashen (1977) gave an outline of the order, as shown in Figure 4.1 below (p.84). The diagram should be understood as showing that learners will produce the morphemes in higher boxes with higher accuracy than those in lower boxes, but that within boxes, there is no clear pattern of difference.





*Figure 4.1 Krashen's (1977) summary of second language grammatical morpheme acquisition sequence*

For example, the verb *-ing* has been found to be mastered before verb *-ed* (regular past *-ed*). The authors point out that the reasons for the order of acquisition are complex and depend on many factors. As with first language acquisition, researchers have not found a single, simple explanation for order.

J. Goldschneider and R. DeKeyser (2001) reviewed this research and recognized a number of factors that are liable to change and cause the order: salience, linguistic complexity, semantic transparency, similarity to a first language form, and frequency.

### (b) Negation

For the research on negation, the authors cite J. Schumann (1979), who did research with Spanish speakers learning English, and H. Wode (1978), who worked with German speakers learning English. The sequence for acquiring negation is summarized as follows:

Stage	Explanation	Instance
1	<i>No or not</i> is put at the beginning of the utterance. The negative element (usually <i>no or not</i> ) is typically set before the verb or the past being negated.	No bicycle. I no like it. Not my friend.
2	The negators <i>-no or don't</i> are put between the subject and the main verb. <i>Don't</i> may even be used before modals like <i>can/should</i> .	He don't like it. I don't can sing.
3	Negative addition to auxiliary verbs (learners begin to place the negative element after auxiliary verbs like <i>are, is, and can</i> ).	You can not go there. He was not happy. She don't like rice.
4	Negative addition to auxiliary verb as in target language rule. However, negative utterances are now marked for tense and number on both the auxiliary and the verb, although not always correctly.	It doesn't work. We didn't have supper. I didn't went there.

### (c) Questions

Pienemann, Johnston, and Brindley (1988) outlined a sequence in the acquisition of questions by French learners of English. Adapted versions of the sequence are presented in stages 1-6 below.

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Stage	Explanation	Instance
1	Single words, formulae or sentence fragments.	Dog? Four children?
2	Declarative word order, no inversion, no fronting.	It's a monster in the right corner? The boys throw the shoes?
3	Fronting: <i>do</i> -fronting; <i>wh</i> -fronting; no inversion; no fronting.	Do you have a shoes on your picture? Where the children are playing?
4	Inversion in <i>wh</i> - + copula: "yes/no" questions with other auxiliaries.	Where is the sun? Is there a fish in the water?
5	Inversion in <i>wh</i> -questions with both an auxiliary and a main verb.	How do you say <i>proche</i> ? What's the boy doing?
6	Complex questions: question tag, negative question, embedded question.	It's better, isn't it? Why can't you go? Can you tell me what the date is today?

Progress to a higher stage does not always mean that learners produce few errors, based on the data in Table 4.1(p.88 in the text and above). These examples are obtained from three adult Japanese learners of L2 communicating with a native speaker in a "spot the differences" task. In this task, learners have similar but not the same pictures, and they have to ask questions until they find out how different the learners' picture is from the one their interlocutor has.

#### (d) Possessive determiners

In the case of a developmental sequence for the English

possessive forms in the interlanguage of French-and Spanish-speaking learners, four main stages are classified on the basis of eight steps in the sequence.

Stage	Explanation	Example
1. Pre-emergence	No use of possessive determiners ( <i>his/her</i> ). Definite article or <i>your</i> used for all persons, genders, and numbers.	The little boy play with the bicycle. This boy cry in the arm of your mother.
2. Emergence	Use of <i>his</i> and/or <i>her</i> , with a strong liking for only one of the forms. In French and Spanish, the correct forms of the possessive determiners are equal to the grammatical gender of the object or person that is possessed. Such forms are introduced into the interlanguage of French and Spanish learners of English.	The mother is dressing her little boy, and she put her clothes, her pant, her coat, and then she finish.
3. Post-emergence	Differentiated use of <i>his</i> or <i>her</i> but not when the object possessed has natural gender.	The girl fell on her bicycle. She look his father and cry.
4.	No error use of <i>his</i> and <i>her</i> in all contexts including natural gender and body parts.	The little girl with her dad play together. And the dad take his girl on his shoulder and he hurt his back.

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Native English speakers learning French, or other languages, also have to learn a new way of determining the grammatical gender of each and every noun for choosing possessive determiners.

(e) Relative clauses

A clear outline of the observed form of acquisition for relative clauses is provided in Table 4.2(p.90). It is connected to the “accessibility hierarchy,” and it shows the obvious ease and frequency with which learners have “access” (or exposure) to certain structures in the target language.

The studies of a large number of languages by E. Keenan and B. Comrie (1977) confirmed the acquisition of structures in descending order (from the top to the bottom of the list). According to S. Gass (1982) and others, if a second language learner could utilize one of the structures at the bottom of the list, the learner would probably be able to use any structures that come before it. However, the opposite (top of the list) would not necessarily be able to use them in any of the positions further down the list.

Some types of first language influence have been noticed in the acquisition of relative clauses. First, learners without a particular relative clause type (e.g., object of comparison) in their first language have much more difficulty learning to use that type of English. Second, learners whose first language forms relative clauses in a substantially different way (e.g., Japanese and Chinese) may keep away from using relative clauses even when their interlanguage is on

a fairly high level. This is because in Japanese and Chinese the relative clause comes before the noun it modifies. Third, first language influence is observed in the learners’ errors. Arabic speakers of English, for example, tend to produce both relative markers and the pronoun it replaces.

(f) Reference to past

The acquisition of the tense and form of a verb is grouped into four types:

- (i) No past tense. At the beginning, learners with limited language knowledge do not show any L2 linguistic features for expressing past time, relying on realistic means instead, in order to mention time and place: “My son come. He work in restaurant. Vietnam. We work too hard.”
- (ii) Grammatical morpheme marking the verb for past without past tense: “Me working long time. Now stop.”
- (iii) Past tense forms of irregular verbs without grammatical morpheme before the regular past is used correctly: “We went to school every day. We spoke Spanish.”
- (iv) Overgeneralization of *-ed* ending on the regular verb in the past or the use of the wrong past tense form, for example the present perfect form rather than the simple past: “My sister caught a big fish. She has lived here since fifteen years.”

K. Bardovi-Harlig (2000) provided evidence of Lexical Aspect

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Hypothesis showing that the acquisition of tense and grammatical aspect is affected by lexical aspect. K. Bardovi-Harlig and others have found that learners more probably mark past tense on some verbs (e.g., “I broke the vase”) and short, quickly finished actions than on others (e.g., stative verbs: “She seemed happy last week”), as well as activities that may continue for some time (e.g., “I swam all afternoon”). Less frequently, learners use simple past markers for activities that continued for time or states that may be perceived as constants (e.g., “He seemed happy to sit by the lake”). Learners seem to find it easier to mark past tense on verbs when verbs express something whose end point can easily be determined and are referred to as accomplishments and achievements (e.g., “I ran three miles” and “My brother took an aspirin and went to bed”). These differences are caused by the lexical aspect or the kinds of meaning from the different types of verb.

L. Collins (2002) provided the proof of L1 transfer showing that French learners performed the use of the present perfect as a substitute for the past tense with verbs expressing completed actions, or perfective aspect (i.e., achievements and accomplishments). However, Collins comes to the conclusion that “the first language influence does not override the effects of lexical aspect; rather it occurs within it.” In other words, the first language influence works with the effect of lexical aspect: lexical aspect is determined by lexical meanings on verbs.

(g) Movement through developmental sequence (stages)

Truly, there are systematic and predictable developmental stages in second language acquisition. However, at a given point learners may use sentences recognized at several different stages. It is perhaps better to presume a stage is reached following the development and increasing rate of occurrence of new forms rather than by the total loss of earlier ones.

A movement through developmental sequences refers to three stages in language learning, particularly one that is grammar-based, for instance, subject + verb inversion in the case of correct questions (see page 86 in the text). Correct questions at Stage 1 are not sentences, but "chunks" (units of language longer than a word but shorter than a sentence) which have internal structure and play a role in comprehension and production, for example, "Four children?"

At Stage 2, advanced learners practice the word order of questions with declarative sentences, without any inversion or fronting. For example, "The boys throw the shoes?" At Stage 3, questions are formed by giving a question form (most often a *wh*- word or a form of the verb "do") at the beginning of a sentence with declarative word order, without any inversion. For example, "Where the children are playing?"

One different and important comment is given on first language influence on second-language acquisition. Seemingly, learners do not assume that they can simply transfer the structures of their first language into the second one. However, as H. Wode (1978) and H.



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Zobl (1980) observed, when learners get to a developmental point at which they happen to note a “crucial similarity” between their first language and interlanguage forms, they may have difficulty moving beyond that stage or they may over-generalize their first language form, which causes errors.

### (C) More about First Language Influence

The first language may influence learners’ interlanguage in several ways. As researchers have reported, there were remarkable resemblances in the interlanguage patterns of learners from the five examples of different first language backgrounds (Spanish, Swedish, Dutch, French, and German). Despite the great variety in the first and second language combinations, the similarities were strongest in the earliest stages of second language acquisition.

It is definitely true in the minds of most researchers and teachers that learners use their knowledge of other languages as they attempt to work out the complexities of the new language. The first language shows influences on developmental sequences. To give an example, Spanish learners of English tend to stay at the stage of longer use of preverbal *no*, when the learners reach a certain stage and notice a similarity to their first language. Next, German speakers add inversion of subject and lexical verbs in questions to the sequence and French speakers reject subject-auxiliary inversion with noun subjects.

The phenomenon of “avoidance,” which J. Schachter (1974)

described, is partly due to first language influence on learners' interlanguage. They try to evade a hard word or structure, and tend to choose a simpler, easier word or structure. Learners became aware that a feature in the target language is so distant and different from their first language that they prefer not to try it.

"Interference" errors, which H. Ringbom (1986) found, were made in English by both Finnish-Swedish and Swedish-Finnish bilinguals. The errors were most often caused by Swedish, not Finnish. Swedish and English languages belong to Germanic in the Indo-European languages. Both do share a lot of characteristics and Swedish learners of English would have an English equivalent in a word, sentence or structure. The Finnish language, on the other hand, belongs to a quite different language family (Finno-Ugric), and learners use Finnish as a source of possible transfer far less often, whether their own first language was Swedish or Finnish. This shows less transfer for Finnish learners of English.

In connection with the perception of similarity, risk taking has been shown to have limits. E. Kellerman (1986) discovered that Dutch learners of English often hesitated to accept certain idiomatic expressions or unusual uses of words such as "The wave broke on the shore," but readily admitted, "He broke the cup," even though both are straightforward translation of sentences with the Dutch verb *breken*.

Another influence of the first language on second language

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acquisition was adverb position in French and English, as L. White (1991) described in Table 4.3 on page 95. French learners of English and English learners of French have difficulty getting rid of a form similar to one in their first language that does not occur in the target language. English learners of French accept SVAO grammatically in French, not correctly in English. White indicates that it is difficult to notice that some *-ing* is not present in the input, especially when its translation equivalent sounds perfectly all right and communication does not break down.

Our comprehension of the influence of the first language on the second language has improved in recent decades. Current opinions of second language development give special importance to the interaction (or mutual influence) between the first language or other previously learned language, cognitive processes, and samples of the target language that learners experience in the input. As T. Odlin indicates in a wide range of examinations, the complexity of this relationship has encouraged very many investigations. A lot of questions have not been answered yet.

We now move from the acquisition of morphology and syntax in the second language on to the learning of other important parts of communicative competence: vocabulary, pragmatics and pronunciation.

## (D) Communicative Competence

According to the *Longman Dictionary of Language Teaching and*

*Applied Linguistics* (2010), communicative competence seeks to make meaningful communication by using learners’ knowledge of whether it is feasible, appropriate, or done in a speech community. Communicative competence is made up of

- i. grammatical competence (knowledge of the grammar, vocabulary, phonology, and semantics of a language)
- ii. sociolinguistic competence (knowledge of the relationship between language and its nonlinguistic context, knowing how to use and respond properly to different types of speech acts)
- iii. discourse competence (knowledge of how to begin and end conversations)
- iv. and strategic competence (knowledge of communication strategies that can make up for weakness in other areas).

When we think about second language learners’ improving knowledge of their target language, these three items (vocabulary, pragmatics, and pronunciation) in communicative competence bear the great and practical burden for acquiring the second language, aside from morphology and syntax.

#### (a) Vocabulary

P. Meara (1980) detailed and specified vocabulary learning as “a neglected aspect of language learning.” The acquisition of vocabulary has become one of the most vital functions in second language acquisition research.

For most people, the importance of vocabulary seems very clear

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because we can share our ideas, feelings or thoughts by using words that are not placed in the proper order, pronounced perfectly, or indicated with the appropriate grammatical morphemes. However, communication often breaks down if we do not use the correct word. Although we can make up for language defects by indirectly using more words than are necessary and by gestures, the significance and influence of vocabulary cannot be too emphasized in communication.

According to recent research, an educated adult speaker of English is believed to know at least 20,000 words. Luckily, most everyday conversation needs something like 2,000 words. Even so, learning a basic vocabulary represents a significant achievement for a second language acquisition learner.

The first step in being aware of a word may simply be to recognize that it is a word. When second language learners acquire new vocabulary easily, one of the vital factors is frequency with which the word is seen, heard, and understood. P. Nation (2001) reviewed a number of studies recommending that a learner needs to have many meaningful encounters with a new word before it becomes firmly fixed in memory. Rough calculations show emphatically 16 times in some studies. Even more encounters than 16 times may be required of a learner who can get back the word in fluent speech or automatically understand the meaning of the word when it occurs in a new context. The ability to understand the meaning of the word without focused attention is completely necessary for both fluent speaking and reading (i.e., without effort, with few hesitations, and

with a good level of comprehension).

The second step in learning new words is reading. The best source of vocabulary development is reading for pleasure, as S. Krashen (1985, 1989) has asserted. B. Laufer (1992) and others have indicated that it is easy and useful to guess the meaning from the context and learn new words from reading on the condition that second language learners know 95% or more of the words in a text, preferably in non-fiction reading materials, not in narratives. Furthermore, learners should encounter a word many times and must see or hear the words and connect them to meaning as many times as possible before they are well established.

Regarding the learning of a new language, the presence of words with the same origin as other words and loanwords can also be used to good advantage for vocabulary development. (*Haus* in German is cognate with *house* in English. *Kampuni* in Swahili is a borrowing from *company* in English.)

On the other hand, students may have particular difficulty with a word which has the same or very similar form in two languages, but which has a different meaning in each. The similarity may make a second language learner use the word incorrectly. For example, the French word *experience* means *experiment*, and not *experience* in English. "Yesterday we performed an interesting experience in the laboratory."

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Finally, J. Hulstijn and B. Laufer (2001) provide evidence that vocabulary development is more successful when learners fully take part in activities that require them to attend carefully to the new words and even to use them in productive tasks (speaking and writing). In my view, it is highly effective for learners to improve their language abilities to actively produce their own speech and writing by using the new words. Receptive language knowledge only is not enough for speeding up and acquiring vocabulary development. In other words, it is not sufficient for learners to understand only the speech and writing of other people without enhancing productive abilities. I. Kojic-Sabo and P. Lightbown (1999) found the effort and the use of good learning strategies, such as keeping a notebook, looking words up in a dictionary, preferably an English-English dictionary, and reviewing what has been learned were associated with better vocabulary development.

Second language learners whose goal is to use language for academic purposes must learn to do all things such as inferring a new word in the context, grasping the general meaning in a familiar context, confirming some conclusions from each academic paragraph or chapter, using the word to complete a sentence or creating a new sentence, and understanding a joke with homonyms. The reason why second language learners' goal lies in academic purposes is that learners may be prepared to be able to deal with the integrated skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing requirements on academic courses based on the study of how language is properly used for academic purposes. These four skills are highly developed when

lessons involve activities that relate listening and speaking to reading and writing. Vocabulary development continues steadily.

In my opinion, these tasks are intellectually challenging for second language learners and teachers because they require great patience, a lot of time and effort, a variety of skills and a wide range of knowledge. It is truly worthwhile to carry out these new and demanding tasks with great effort and determination. I think that better vocabulary development is absolutely needed for learners to achieve goals for academic purposes.

#### (b) Pragmatics

Pragmatics, an essential ability, is how language is used in context to express and comprehend a speaker's intended meaning. Even second language learners who acquire a vocabulary of 5,000 words and a good knowledge of the syntax and morphology of the target language need to develop skills for interpreting requests, responding politely to compliments or apologies, recognizing humor and managing conversations, despite the difficulties in using language. They should grasp many meanings of utterances that the same sentences can have in different situations. It is essential for learners to acquire the ability to comprehend the speakers' intended meaning through speech acts.

According to the *Longman Dictionary of Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics* (p.449), pragmatics is the study of the use of language in communication, especially the relationships between



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sentences and the contexts and situations in which they are used. Pragmatics includes the study of

- (i) how the interpretation and use of utterances depends on knowledge of the real world (ordinary life with all the practical problems)
- (ii) how speakers use and understand speech acts
- (iii) how the structure of sentences is influenced by the relationship between the speaker and the listener.

Among other aspects of language use, pragmatics includes the study of speech acts, particularly illocutionary acts (intended effects of speech acts: the function of requests, apologizing, thanking).

Learners carrying out various roles and developing participant organization structures (for example, pair and group work) will be able to perform a wider range of communicative functions through output as well as input. Furthermore, and more importantly, Kasper and Rose's (2002) research on the teaching of pragmatics has shown that pragmatic features can be successfully learned in classroom settings and that explicit rather than implicit teaching is most effective. This point is encouraging for foreign language learners who do not get experience of conversational interaction outside the classroom. Second language pragmatics should be taught and should be integrated into classroom instruction in order to achieve learners' communicative goals. Kindly refer to G. Kasper and K. Rose (2002) for an outline of the five stages in the development of pragmatics

(pages 102/103 in the text).

(c) Phonology

Grammar has been the long-time focus of second language learning research. Vocabulary and pragmatics have also increased in the conscious awareness of teachers and researchers. However, less is known about pronunciation. How it is learned and taught is not specified. Historically, pronunciation was a central point in language teaching during the audio-lingual era, the 1950s and 1960s, especially in the United States, and has been widely used in many other parts of the world. The theory behind the audio-lingual method is the aural-oral approach to language teaching. Most pronunciation teaching concentrated on getting learners to perceive and produce distinctions between single sounds (i.e., segmentals) in minimal pair drills (for example, *ship* and *sheep*). In other words, they emphasized the formation of habits through repetition and practice. After the late 1970s, special attention was focused on rhythm, stress, and intonation (i.e., suprasegmentals). Suprasegmentals were believed to more distinctly influence communication (Celce-Muricia, Brinton, and Goodwin, 1996) in the area of language teaching.

There is academic and practical work to support our understanding of the processes involved in phonological progress in a second language and of the factors that causes it. Contrastive analysis has helped to clarify some aspects of first language influence on second language learners' phonological development.

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Several examples are shown as follows (pages 104/105 in the text): Japanese and Korean learners of English tend to hear and produce *l* and *r* because these sounds are not distinct or not different in their own language. Spanish speakers are not likely to produce consonant clusters beginning with *s* at the beginning of a word in “I e-speak e-Spanish” for lack of consonant clusters beginning with *s* at the start of a word in the Spanish language.

There has been little research to prove the developmental sequence of individual sounds in second language phonological acquisition. However, there is evidence for similarity in the acquisition of some features of stress and rhythm. Clearly, the learner’s first language performs an important role. The amount and type of constant contact with the target language and the degree of frequent use of the first language have been recognized as influential in the production of pronunciation. T. Piske, I. MacKay and J. Flege (2001) have disclosed that longer periods of exposure to the second language can lead to better pronunciation than before. They also found that adults who continue to make greater use of their first language may have stronger accents in the second language.

Recent studies show that phonology can have a strong effect on pronunciation instruction, particularly if the instruction concentrates special attention on suprasegmental rather than segmental aspects of pronunciation (Hahn 2004). T. Derwing and her colleagues (1998, 2003) conducted a series of studies on how intelligible learners were judged to be. They found that learners receiving instruction on

suprasegmental were judged to be easier to understand than learners with instruction on individual sounds. When attention was focused on segmental instruction, it had the good point of producing more accurate individual sounds. On the other hand, this instruction had a bad point: not improving listening perception of the intelligibility of listeners' speech to others. These research results reinforced the current emphasis on suprasegmentals in pronunciation class.

One controversial issue in pronunciation research is whether intelligibility or clear understanding is the standard that learners should strive toward. As M. Munro and T. Derwing (1995) suggest, the presence of a strong foreign accent does not necessarily result in reducing or lessening understanding. A lot of second language learners, particularly those with a high level of knowledge and performance in other aspects of the target language, may be motivated to become very close to a particular target language accent in their pronunciation.

According to recent research on the teaching and learning of pronunciation, clearly decontextualized pronunciation instruction is not sufficient and a combination of instruction, exposure, experience, and motivation is required. In other words, lessons focused on individual sounds only are not enough to improve understanding of spoken language in a real situation. This is because tone and intonation in a sentence are totally disregarded. Achieving native or near-native pronunciation ability is a special skill that is successfully accomplished through a lot of extensive work and conscious effort.

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Unless there is a social context, excellent performance may not be produced by most second language learners.

I believe, however, that such earnest striving for higher standards will be worthwhile and well rewarded for becoming nearer to real and intellectual achievement in performance. It is equally useful for second language learners to improve and acquire productive and receptive abilities by a combined approach of learning grammar, vocabulary, tone, intonation, and pronunciation in contextualized situations.

### Conclusion

To my mind, it would be unwise for second language learners and teachers to abandon the marvelous idea of starting hard tasks and pursuing worthwhile endeavors from the beginning. Never stop learning! And we are still learning English as a whole! Shoot for the best, and you are eagerly expected to steadily continue the real trial.

### References and Further Reading

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## 正 誤 表

横浜商科大学開学四十五周年記念号「紀要」の本文中に誤りがありましたので、下記のように訂正いたします。

※この用紙はなくさずに、「紀要」と一緒に保管しておいてください。

### 243 ページ Introduction の 3 行目

誤 knowledge of the target language influence,

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正 knowledge of the mother language influence,