

LING1003 Language, Thought and Culture



Second language learning and teaching
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Acquisition vs. learning vs. teaching

- **Acquisition** of second languages: at home, in school playgrounds etc
- **Learning** of second languages: conscious activity through classes, textbooks
- **Teaching** of second languages: conscious instruction by adults



Grammar-translation method

- Explicit teaching of rules, practised in translation (e.g. from English into Latin!)
- Advantage: learners can explain their knowledge, discuss it and pass it on. Good training for linguistics?
- Drawback: "Learners leaving school, having achieved high grades in French class via this method, typically find themselves at a loss when confronted by the way the French in France actually use their language." (Yule, p. 193)



Audiolingual method

- Systematic oral presentation of structures of increasing complexity
- Advantage: practice; possibility of authentic materials in language laboratory
- Drawback: based on discredited view of learning from behaviourist psychology, seeing language acquisition as habit formation
- "Moreover, it can be incredibly boring" (Yule)



Communicative approach(es):

- Focus on communicative tasks, often with specific purposes in mind (as in ESP)
- Advantage: authentic materials and situations
- Avoidance of correction (to avoid discouragement, raising of affective filter)
- Drawback: grammatical deficiencies remain uncorrected
- Controversy: is negative evidence necessary to the successful acquisition of L2 grammar?

Immersion

- Subject instruction *in* the L2
- Little/no explicit teaching *of* L2
=> triggers acquisition by
focusing on content not form
- The most effective SLA programme ever? (Krashen 1985)
- Approach adopted by Berlitz
(\$23,000 for 1 week of Cantonese immersion)



Immersion: the Canadian experience



- Children from English-speaking families go to schools where part or all of the curriculum is taught in French
- Students perform as well in English language skills and in subject matter as those taught entirely in English
- Students approach native ability in French, easily outperforming other methods

Steven Krashen's theory of second language acquisition

- **Acquisition**, not learning, should be the goal
- Acquisition requires **comprehensible input**, just as in child first language acquisition
- The **affective filter** (shyness, fear of making mistakes etc) is a barrier to acquisition which must be lowered





Comprehensible Input

- The input hypothesis: humans acquire a language by understanding messages
- This is why immersion is so successful: students are focused on understanding content, not learning the language
- Input should aim at “I + 1”: slightly more advanced than what the student already knows



The Din in the Head

Din: a loud noise which one cannot escape

*“By the third day [in Russia], the linguist in me was noticing a rising **din** of Russian in my head: words, sounds, intonations, phrases, all swimming about in the voices of people I talked with. This din blocked out all my other languages...”*

(Elizabeth Barber, cited in Krashen 1985)



Explaining the Din in the Head

Krashen's hypothesis:

- The Din is the result of stimulation of the Language Acquisition Device
- The Din is a kind of mental rehearsal which has the effect of consolidating what has been heard, resulting in acquisition
- Children's monologues may have a similar function
- "Dins" have also been described in other domains, e.g. in reaction to unfamiliar music



The Natural Approach

- An approach to teaching based on Krashen's theory of second language acquisition
- Communicative tasks: ordering food, giving directions etc.
- Relaxation to lower the affective filter
- Correction avoided



Questions and controversies

- Comprehensible input may be necessary, but is it sufficient? - what about output?
- What is the role of the Critical Period, and what is the optimal age for immersion?
- Is *intervention* (such as correction) necessary for certain kinds of error?
(Rutherford 1987)



What about a third language?

- German as L3 (Betty Chan Yin-Fung, HKU M.Phil, 2001)

Im Stock eins **hat** eine Frau, die Klavier spielt
in-the floor one have a woman who piano plays
'On the first floor there's a woman playing the piano.'

- Transfer from L1 (Chinese: *you3 / jau5* 'have/exist') to L3 (German *hat* 'has')



Interlanguage transfer

- French as L3 in Hong Kong (Ingrid Leung Yan-Kit, HKU M.Phil, 1998)

Les femmes à Hong Kong sont données la possibilité de recevoir une éducation “Women in Hong Kong are given the possibility of receiving an education”

- Interlanguage transfer: from L2 English to L3 French
- Psychotypology: the learner's perception of similarity between languages influences transfer



Summary

- Approaches to second language teaching follow trends in psychology and linguistics
- Successful methods such as immersion resemble first language acquisition in fostering incidental learning through focus on content and communication
- Role of grammar teaching still/once again a matter of controversy

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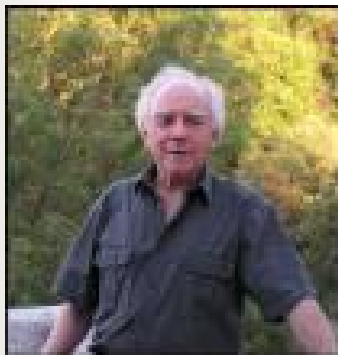
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