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SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION RESEARCH AND THE TEACHING OF GRAMMAR

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I suppose it would not be far off the mark to say that wherever the description or use of grammar comes into applied linguistic thinking or procedures, it ultimately has a bearing on the question of the teaching of grammar. Discussion of the models of the grammar to be used, the procedure and problems of grammatical description or comparison and so on, when performing, perhaps, contrastive studies, or attempting to describe the learner's interlanguage, or devising pedagogical statements for the benefit of teachers, all are done with the ultimate intention of understanding better, or improving, the teaching and learning of grammar. Indeed this has been a central preoccupation of applied linguistic activity since its inception and it has been so because, until recently perhaps, the principal learning task in second language learning has been seen as the acquisition of syntax. The teaching of grammar, then, is a perennial problem. Attempts have, of course, been made to solve it before now. Indeed it was the subject of important investigations in the sixties. One need only mention the GUM project in Gothenburg or the famous Pennsylvania project. But the results of these investigations were strikingly inconclusive, concerned as they were with the attempt to evaluate behaviouristic as against cognitive approaches by means of large scale classroom-based research. With hindsight it is easy enough to be critical of these attempts. Classroom research is always muddy in its results, because of the problems of controlling variables, but also because the theoretical models on which the research was based were primitive and not themselves the result of empirical research. At all events during the last decade there has been a noticeable absence of research into grammar teaching, whilst attention has concentrated more on precisely that empirical research which should have preceded the original investigations. I refer of course to the study of second language acquisition. Until our understanding of the processes of second language acquisition was considerably improved, we could not expect to make practical recommendations which would in their turn improve the quality of grammar teaching or at least explain why the results of the previous investigations seemed to show that it didn't seem to make much difference how you taught grammar, learning would appear to be much the same in all circumstances.

But now with some ten years of empirical research into second language acquisition behind us, it is perhaps time to see whether anything has been learned which can help to answer some of the questions about grammar teaching which have perennially been asked. There are, it is true, distinguished scholars in this field of research, like Evelyn Hatch (1979), who have gone on record as saying that it is still premature to attempt to apply any of the findings of this research. There are others like Dulay and Burt (1973) who quite early in the decade were prepared to make quite revolutionary proposals as a result of their findings. There are others who are more concerned with the purely theoretical implications of this research than its practical relevance to language teaching, such as Krashen.

As applied linguists, however, it seems to me we always have an obligation to attempt to answer practical questions in the light of the best available knowledge, even when it contradicts received wisdom, but knowing always that this knowledge is only provisional and could be proved wrong tomorrow. We are to some degree always in the position of

having to stick our necks out. We cannot abdicate our responsibilities. On the other hand we must of course always qualify our proposals by suitably phrased conditionals which indicate the degree of confidence with which we make them and, of course, attempt to test whatever proposals we make by appropriate operational experiments, difficult though these may be to execute, as I have already suggested. I believe there is now a sufficient body of knowledge available from second language acquisition research to allow us to make such tentative proposals and it is this that I propose to do tonight.

What are the questions which have been traditionally asked about the teaching of grammar? The first and perhaps the most fundamental-sounding question is whether to teach grammar at all or not. In reacting against grammar-translation methods of teaching it was often said that 'We should teach the language, not about it'. This became almost a slogan during the forties and fifties. Did it mean what it seemed to mean? That we should abandon the teaching of grammar altogether. On the face of it it certainly does. But then we have the awkward question: how do you teach the language, or what do you teach of a language, if you don't teach its grammar, pronunciation and vocabulary? The slogan was of course never meant to propose some alternative analysis of the content of language teaching. Language still consisted of a knowledge of grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation. What was in fact being suggested was that the most effective way of inculcating a knowledge of grammar was not by explicitly talking about it, giving rules and example, but by practice of grammatical forms and structures whereby an intuitive knowledge of the rules would be developed. This was the inductive teaching of grammar. Pattern practice was teaching the language, not teaching about the language. The pure form of mim-mem involves no descriptive statements.

Of course at the present time it is possible, as it was not twenty years ago, to contemplate the content of a language teaching course which is not based upon the structural linguistic analysis of what it constitutes to know a language, that is, on a structure of grammar, pronunciation and vocabulary. No such alternative existed at that time. Grammar had to be taught by some means or other along with pronunciation and vocabulary because that is what language consisted of.

So the answer to whether to teach grammar or not was answered by the statement; yes, we should do so but not explicitly. It is with this fundamental question of whether we should teach grammar or not, explicitly or implicitly that I am concerned tonight, rather than with the questions that flow from it such as what content we should give to grammar teaching and how we should organise that content into a structured syllabus. This is because research into second language acquisition has seriously raised the question of whether we can teach grammar, or to put it another way has raised the question of what it is that is being learned when we do teach grammar explicitly.

Research into second language acquisition is overwhelmingly research into the acquisition of the grammar of the second language. This is not because the learning of vocabulary and pronunciation are not recognised as problems too, worthy of investigation, but because second language acquisition research modelled itself in the first instance on first language acquisition research and had as its first immediate question to answer: is L_2 acquisition the same or different from L_1 acquisition. Since L_1 acquisition research was almost entirely devoted to the study

of the acquisition of syntax, so second language acquisition research has come to be concerned almost entirely with the same topic. The other point to make is that second language acquisition research has been carried out almost exclusively by people who would regard themselves as applied linguists and whose training and experience has been in linguistics and language teaching rather than in the development of theory or the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake. The result of this has been that the questions which particular research projects have sought to answer have been prompted by practical considerations as much as by theoretical ones. Hatch (1978), for example lists several questions which have been asked by researchers into second language acquisition and one can immediately see that they have derived from experience in the classroom and considerations of language teaching;

1. Is interlanguage systematic or is it merely a name for the erroneous and inconsistent speech of language learners?

2. If interlanguage is systematic, what is the nature of the system? Can a sequence of acquisition of syntactic structures be shown? How similar and definable are the stages of interlanguage development for all learners? In other words, how much variability is there?

3. If there is a sequence, is it the same for learners from different language backgrounds?

4. Is the sequence the same for children and adults?

5. Is the sequence the same for all learners whether they are receiving instruction or not?

6. If there is a sequence, is it the same as that in first language acquisition or not?

7. Is it possible to set norms to be attained by learners after a given amount of instruction?

8. Is the sequence the same for all modes of experiencing the language: as a foreign language, as a second language, in immersion programmes and so on?

9. Is the sequence the same as the pedagogical sequence in the textbooks and if not, should the pedagogical sequence follow the natural sequence? and finally:

10. If there is a sequence and it appears to be the same for all learners, how do we explain it?

The pedagogical origin of practically all these questions is fairly obvious. Only the last is typical of the sort of question found in a theoretical approach, since theory has to do with explanations, whereas for practical purposes it is usually not necessary to have answers to the question; why? in order to be able to make use of research results.

It will be seen that nearly all the questions centre round the problem of a 'natural sequence', and one of them specifically connects the sequence with the structure of the syllabus. One of the principal

motivations for the study of second language acquisition has been to provide some sort of justification for the structural syllabus. It had long been recognised that the structural syllabus as found in textbooks lacked any psychological justification and indeed apart from some rather vague notion of gradation from simpler to more complex structures, it was justified, if at all, on some basis of relative utility, itself largely subjective in origin. One can safely say that the principal objective of second language acquisition research has been to establish the existence of some general sequence of acquisition and to discover whether this was common to children and adults, or more accurately, whether it was common to learners in formal as well as informal learning situations. The reason for this is fairly obvious. If learners receiving instruction develop their knowledge in the same way as those not receiving instruction, it would throw doubt upon the role of instruction itself, or rather upon the notion that the teacher could control the development of the learner's knowledge. It would not of course mean that teaching was useless, only that it was the learner who called the tune, not the teacher, and that it was the teacher's task to adapt himself to the learner and not vice versa.

As is well known the earlier empirical research into second language acquisition based its methodology on that of first language acquisition studies, specifically those of Brown and De Villiers. The reason for this was twofold. Firstly it was convenient to take over an existing and apparently successful methodology and secondly because one of the questions always being asked about second language acquisition was: is it the same as first language acquisition? If it could be shown that the developmental sequence in terms of certain features of the target language were acquired in the same order as they were learned by infants acquiring their native language then there would be a strong presumption that the mechanism of acquisition was the same in both cases. It was for this reason that Dulay and Burt (1974) chose to study the acquisition of the now famous fourteen morphemes. These were originally chosen by Brown because they were features of the language which could be unequivocally marked as correctly or not correctly used depending upon the context. The essentially methodological reasons for selecting the morphemes has always made it difficult to find any functionally, semantically or psychologically satisfying reason for the acquisition order which emerged. As we shall see later, when a linguistic grouping is imposed upon the arbitrary set of morphemes a much clearer and intelligible pattern emerges.

The morpheme studies have been observational longitudinal and experimental cross-sectional respectively. By this I mean that either a small number of subjects has been studied observationally over a certain period of time to try and discover the development that takes place during that time, or groups of subjects have been tested by experimental elicitation procedures at one time to try and discover the 'accuracy' with which they used the various morphemes. The disadvantage of each approach are obvious. As with all observational techniques you can never know that the subjects' performance is a true reflection of their knowledge at any particular time, and because of the quantity of the data generated, much of it irrelevant to immediate purposes, it is only feasible to study a small number of subjects. This in turn makes generalisations uncertain. On the other hand experimental methods enable one to elicit the forms one is interested in, but one cannot always be certain that different methods of elicitation will not elicit different forms, or the same forms but in different frequencies. Which is what almost certainly happens.

There is also of course the problem of relating together the results of the two different approaches. The order yielded by observation over a period of time represents what can be properly called an acquisition order, but the order yielded by elicitation cross-sectionally is an order of 'accuracy of use', or so called 'accuracy order', sometimes called 'difficulty order', on the theory that what is more difficult to use will be used with less accuracy. The problem is: what is the relation between these two orders? In the event, they have been shown to correlate highly with each other. Can we safely now assume that what is most accurately used at any particular moment by a learner is something he has learnec earlier, whilst what he uses less accurately is something that he has not yet fully acquired? On the whole, common sense would suggest that there is indeed some logical connection between the two, particularly if one accepts the notion now becoming clearer from later research that acquisition of any particular item is a slow, more-or-less smooth progression from not knowing to full knowledge, and that during the period of acquisition the learner typically shows apparently inconsistent or variable behaviour, sometimes getting the thing right, sometimes not.

One of the main criticisms raised against the experimental cross-sectional methods of morpheme study was that the method of scoring, that is, stating mean accuracy orders for morphemes as used by groups, seriously obscured the degree of variability that there was within any group, and whilst the group mean accuracy scores might indeed correlate highly with the acquisition order, this had no meaning unless there could be shown to be little or no variability within each morpheme score. Rosansky (1976) showed that this could not be taken for granted and indeed showed that for one and the same subject his acquisition order did not correlate significantly with his cross-sectional accuracy performance, thus showing convincingly that variability was a characteristic of learner's performance and that accuracy orders and acquisition orders were difficult to equivalate.

This problem of variability is one which the techniques used to study morpheme acquisition and accuracy were not adapted to deal with. The concept of learning by degrees could not easily be accommodated within the methodological framework. The method of scoring, counting a 90% presence of a morpheme correctly used as evidence of 'knowing' the morpheme, and anything less as 'not knowing', flies in the face of experience and common sense. But not only does the scoring method disregard the occurence of a form when it should not be used, it also prevents us from finding out whether all the variants of a form or only one variant is produced. It prevents us furthermore, as implied already, from discovering what acquisition looks like below the 90% criterion level. This problem was solved by Anderson (1978) by using the group range method of scoring. This method showed up the variability in the data. It did this by establishing the percentage of subjects who used any particular morpheme correctly between 100-90% of the time, between 80-90% of the time, 70-80% of the time and so on.

Finally, by grouping the morphemes together into a linguistically coherent grouping, that is, Nominal morphemes, Verbal morphemes, Bound morphemes and Free morphemes, Anderson (1978) was able to show that the acquisition orders and accuracy orders demonstrated by all the different researchers with both adults and children were essentially similar.

There is, of course, a great deal more to be said about morpheme acquisition studies. That there have been considerable problems in

devising an appropriate methodology for investigation is clear and that there have been problems with the interpretation of results is also undoubted. The question remains: are we entitled at the end of the day to draw any general conclusions from these studies? There is now, I think, no doubt that the accuracy order and the acquisition order of the 8 grammatical functors on which the morpheme studies eventually focussed are essentially similar for adults and children and for learners from different language backgrounds. This has been well shown by Krashen in his review of the whole range of studies. He has established that when the method of collection of data, that is, when the elicitation procedures, were equivalent the resultant orders were significantly similar.

In other words the similarities shown in the various research results are real and therefore reflect some underlying process. The difficulty is to know just what the meaning is. The importance of these studies is that they show that whatever processes lie behind the results are equally true for adults receiving instruction and children in a free learning environment. In other words they go some way to answering the question about the influence of teaching on the learning process. They suggest that it may well play a much smaller part than previously thought and that its apparent role varies according to the sort of elicitation procedures that happen to be used.

What these morpheme acquisition studies also show is that the developmental sequence of a second language is, perhaps unsurprisingly, not the same as that of the mother tongue, though there are similarities. One cannot say that morpheme studies have put an end to the persistent question of whether first and second language acquisition are similar or different processes. This only became an active question when the notion of the specific language acquisition device, or LAD, was still widely accepted and people wanted to know whether it was available for second language acquisition. Since the popularity of this particular theory has waned, so has the topicality of the question whether first and second language acquisition processes are the same. After all, the processes may well be the same anyway, and <u>probably are</u>, but that does not logically entail that the <u>products</u> are the same. By this I mean the sequential order of acquisition. Clearly the circumstances, that is most of the variables in the second language learning situation, are quite different from the first language learning situation. That the processes are similar is strongly evidenced by the strong similarity of the types of error produced by both first and second language learners.

What is a more serious criticism of the whole morpheme acquisition research is its simplistic conceptualisation of the whole second language acquisition process. Essentially it was still influenced by the behaviouristic notions of language learning (though it would have strenuously denied this), notions that language learning is a <u>cumulative</u> process of adding new forms to a structural store. This notion of <u>cumulation</u> accounts for the total absence of any interest in this research into the nature of the errors produced by learners and their <u>misuse</u> of morphemes .

This simplistic notion of language learning as a cumulative process is not so much in evidence in what have been called auxiliary studies, that is the acquisition of the rules for the correct use of the auxiliary elements in English, namely interrogation and negation. It quickly became evident that the acquisition of the rules for the proper formation of structures involving the auxiliary could not be a one-off process, as

it was believed was the case in the acquisition of the plural morpheme or indeed even the definite article. In both cases, of course, one would wish to suggest that what was being acquired was not simply a form, like a new lexical item, but a rule or some sub-system of opposition. However what was clear was that in attempting to express negation there were several stages or steps before the final and correct rule was arrived at. Thus in the case of negation in English for example the first stage involved the placing of a negative morpheme, usually not, in extrasentential initial position; This is followed by the movement of the negator to preverb position, later by an alternative negative allomorph unanalyzed don't before the main verb. At the same time a variety of auxiliaries begin to appear in the negative form, isn't and can't and finally as evidence of the do-support rule, alternative forms such as doesn't and didn't. Again these sequences seem to be independant of the nature of the mother tongue of the learner, since they have been found with German, Spanish and Arabic speakers.

One speaks of stages of learning, and this is a usage which is borrowed from Brown, who identifies various stages of acquiring the mother tongue. But we should really beware of using such a term, since the identification of stages is essentially arbitrary. There is no clear point at which there is a sudden switch from one system to another but always one finds a more or less smooth transition where we are dealing rather with a change of probabilities which can best be expressed in terms of the percentage occurrence of one variant form rather than another. We are dealing with a continuum, not discrete phenomena. The origin of the notion of discrete stages is of course derived from the linguist who, anyway until recently, could not conceive of anything but well-defined grammars. Variation, if it was accepted at all, and it was only grudgingly so, was free and not context dependent. It was a major step forward therefore in second language research when the sociolinguists' techniques for dealing with dynamic phenomena, such as post-creole continua, were introduced. The first to do so in the field of syntax was Hyltenstam who was investigating the acquisition of negation by learners of Swedish as a second language. He made use of the notion of variable rule and implicational scaling. He also combined both longitudinal and cross-sectional techniques of data collection.

Hyltenstam (1977) tested 160 adult students from a variety of unrelated language backgrounds. His test was a modified close-procedure which required the subjects to locate the negative morpheme in a position either before or after the finite verbal element in both main and subordinate clauses. The rule for the correct placement of the negator in Swedish depends upon whether the finite element is an auxiliary or not and whether the clause is main or subordinate. He tested his subjects at two times some five weeks apart after further formal instruction. What he found was that the learners started off by placing the negator before the verb whatever it was and in whatever type of clause. This strategy yielded some correct sentences and some erroneous ones. The next stage was the gradual differentiation of placement in relation to auxiliary or main verb, leading to a correct placement of the negator in main clauses. Only when this stage had been reached did it appear that the learning of the correct placement of the negator in subordinate clauses could begin and the gradual process of the discovery of the rule take place.

By the use of implicational scaling Hyltenstam was able to show the remarkable regularity which lay behind the apparent variability in the performance of his subjects. He was able to show that when backsliding

took place, as it did in a few of his subjects, they reverted to an earlier point in the same developmental sequence. He also showed that the native language of the subjects made no difference to the developmental course. All subjects moved along the same continuum. He was even able to show that the different modal auxiliaries arranged themselves into an implicational series as far as the correct placement of the negator was concerned. Thus the negator began first to be correctly placed in the environment of the modal Kan, then vil, then far then ska and finally hinner.

What emerged from Hyltenstam's work is a rather remarkable confirmation of the essentially regular character of acquisition. Where inconsistency or variability in a learner's behaviour appears to be present, if differing contexts are taken into account, the variability can usually be reduced to regularity. The methodological difficulty is of course the recognition of the environments which exercise a selective influence on learning. Already some work with articles, the copula and progressive auxiliary suggest that the variability with which the morpheme studies were unable to cope can be reduced to regularity by studying the contexts in which the variant forms occur. Thus, for example, in the case of the copula it is found to occur first in the environment of a following adjective. Its use then spreads to a noun phrase complement and finally to a propositional phrase complement. Further work, I feel sure, will demonstrate the essentially regular and systematic nature of acquisition in other areas of grammar.

The problem from a practical point of view is how to reconcile this apparently autonomous and regular process of acquisition with the structural syllabus in the teaching situation, how to reconcile the 'natural order' with the teaching order. On the whole most teachers work on the principle that learners, or a fair proportion of them, do in fact learn what they are taught eventually. This is demonstrated so it would be claimed by their ability to perform more or less adequately in formal exercises and written tests of grammar. And yet when we examine their performance in the spontaneous communicative use of the language they usually perform very much less well, making many errors which they would not do in the more reflective work in the classroom.

To resolve this apparent contradiction it has been suggested that in language performance there are two sources of knowledge, an implicit and an explicit source. The notion of an implicit source is of course common place. The great majority of people operate throughout their whole lives with such an intuitive, unanalysed knowledge of their native language. Clearly an explicit, analysed, formal knowledge is quite unnecessary for a perfectly adequate command of a language for all normal communicative purposes. The decline in the teaching of formal grammar of the mother tongue in England was at least partly motivated by the realisation that, contrary to general belief in earlier times, it played no part in the development of the ability to write or speak correctly. The ability to verbalise a rule is no guarantee that it will be obeyed in spontaneous performance.

This intuitive implicit knowledge of a language is acquired unconsciously in the process of exposure to the language and through the need and attempt to use it for communcative purposes. There is no reason to suppose that the process is any different in the case of a second language in the absence of formal instruction. Let us remember that almost certainly the great majority of the world's people are multilingual and have become so without the benefit of any formal instruction. In the case

of children at least there really does not appear to be any reason to make any distinction between first and second language acquisition in this respect. The morpheme acquisition orders established for children in the research into second language acquisition were acquired in informal settings as a result of the children's interaction with native speakers. One might have expected that the adult acquisition order could have been significantly different since the adults investigated were all receiving formal instruction. The order of teaching the morphemes does not correspond to the order of acquisition. It appears therefore that the implicit knowledge upon which the subjects relied when they were being investigated was something that they had acquired autonomously rather than had been specifically taught.

Now it has, of course, long been accepted that, given that our descriptions of the grammar of a language are only partial, anyone learning a second language must discover some considerable part of the grammar for himself. There are many 'rules' of a second language which are simply not known to scholars and cannot therefore be explicitly taught. Furthermore it is also fairly evident that some rules which are known are simply too difficult to learn consciously. The rules governing the use of the perfect aspect in English would probably fall into this category.

The notion of two knowledge sources, the implicit and the explicit, is certainly not new, nor particularly controversial. If there are two sorts of knowledge then the processes of developing them will presumably be different. I have already suggested that the implicit knowledge is acquired subconsciously in the process of attempting to communicate. Presumably by some sort of process of generalisation and inferencing. In the case of second language acquisition it appears that it is little affected by the mother tongue. This is borne out by the relatively little evidence of transfer phenomena in the speech of children or adults who have acquired this implicit knowledge in informal settings. Interference at the grammatical level (if we must still persist in using this loaded term) is typically the product of the formal instructional situation. Explicit knowledge is learned by formal teaching, by practice exercises, drills, imitation, memorisation and feedback in the form of correction.

There are two sources for explicit knowledge; external, that is knowledge given by the teacher about the language and internal. By this I mean that the learner consciously adduces rules from observation of his own spontaneous performance. This phenomenon has been observed in quite young children. There is therefore some interaction between the two sources of knowledge.

The formal evidence for the existence of these two kinds of knowledge is, for example, the ability demonstrated by learners to correct the errors in their own spontaneous performance. In the typical case a learner can self-correct about 30% of his own errors. This suggests that one function, perhaps the main function of explicit knowledge is editorial or monitoring. This does not of course mean that no self-correction can be performed without explicit knowledge. On the contrary we are constantly monitoring our own spontaneous performance and are able to spot slips-of-the-tongue and other performance failures. We can correct ourselves but may not be able to explain the nature of the error for lack of the necessary metalinguistic apparatus of knowledge of the rules. This is the basis of the distinction between what have been called 'rule' and 'feel' judgements. And it is through this distinction that experimental evidence for the existence of two knowledge sources has been sought. Rule-judgements

depend upon explicit knowledge, feel-judgements upon implicit knowledge. The editing function takes times and specific focussing on formal properties. A task therefore which requires merely the spotting that there is some ungrammaticality in a test item will take less time than a judgement which requires an identification of the grammatical category in which the error is located. Bialystok (forthcoming) has been able to show that under different time conditions subjects are differentially able to make ungrammaticality judgements and identify the location of errors. Where merely deciding that an utterance was ungrammatical, that is, a feel-judgement, extra time made no difference to the subjects to make a correct judgement. Where, however, the identification of the nature of the ungrammaticality was involved, that is a rule-judgement, the extra time made a significant difference to the proportion of correct responses.

Further evidence of two knowledge sources is the results of the morpheme acquisition studies. It was there found that different orders correlated with different methods of elicitation and it was only when methods of elicitation were held constant that orders of accuracy correlated well across groups. If indeed the function of explicit knowledge is essentially editorial and requires time to operate then those techniques of elicitation which give subjects time for reflection and more particularly focus their attention upon the formal properties of the language will call explicit knowledge into play. It is assumed of course that there is no 'natural order' of acquisition of explicit knowledge since it will depend upon the particular syllabus that has been taught.

The really important question that now arises is: can spontaneous communication be initiated by explicit knowledge? The theory claims quite categorically that all communicative activity (and that rules out the major part of all language activity in the conventional classroom) is initiated by implicit knowledge. The reason in part is the time factor. The conscious process involved in the use of explicit knowledge simply rules out access to such knowledge under the time constraints of real spoken communicative activity. Where writing is involved a different time scheme operates allowing reference to explicit knowledge, although the proponents of the theory still maintain that written communication is initiated by implicit knowledge and merely edited or monitored by explicit knowledge.

So far the evidence from experiments does seem to coincide with experience in the classroom and the theory does account for a great deal of the sometimes distressing disparity between the learners' performance in formal exercises and his attempts at spontaneous communication. But what is the really important question and one on which there is clearly a good deal of difference of opinion is on the relationship between implicit and explicit knowledge. Krashen, with whom this theoretical formulation is largely connected, takes the quite unequivocal position that the two knowledge sources are quite independent and that no 'leakage' occurs between them, and yet we have anecdotal evidence of learners discovering and making explicit reference to 'rules' of their own linguistic behaviour. But that is movement from implicit to explicit. What interests teachers, of course, is whether there can be any movement of knowledge from the explicit to the implicit. If there cannot then the whole basis of the teaching of grammar as it is normally thought of is called in question. Bialystok (1978) in her theoretical formulation allows for movement in both directions and McLaughlin's (1978) suggestion is that what he calls 'controlled processes' which refer to some sort of practice procedures, lead to implicit knowledge. Krashen (1979) responds by pointing to such perhaps extreme examples as the subject in one of his investigations,

'P', who was able to correct completely all her spontaneous errors, who had, in effect, known explicitly all the necessary rules for twenty years but had never incorporated them into her implicit knowledge.

The most powerful evidence however for the lack of transfer from explicit to implicit knowledge is the probable existence as shown by studies in second language acquisition of a natural developmental continuum in the acquisition of grammatical features of the language. If transfer from explicit to implicit knowledge were indeed a regular feature then the natural sequence could be seriously interfered with in the case of learners receiving formal instruction and yet the evidence, such as it is, and it is fairly convincing, does not show this to be the case. Perhaps transfer only occurs when it helps an already active process of acquisition and not otherwise. In other words teaching should be coordinated with learning and not learning with teaching. Such suggestions have of course been made: namely that the structural syllabus should follow the natural sequence. In principle this seems a reasonable proposal, but I think it suffers from various defects. First of all the structural syllabus is based upon a linguistic analysis of the structure of language and not upon a psycholinguistic analysis of what is meant by 'knowing' a language. We do not possess such a description. Secondly the linguistic analysis, as has already been suggested, leads to the concept of the syllabus as a cumulative operation of adding one discrete bit of knowledge after another, such as a form, a structure or a meaning, whereas second language acquisition studies suggest a much more organic process for the growth of the knowledge of a language. An analogy would be with the growth of a flower bud. One can talk about stages (arbitrary though they may be) in the development of the bud but it would not make sense to write a linear programme for its growth. Everything is happening at the same time all the time. It seems to me that so long as the grammatical data to which the learner is exposed is not constrained in any way by the structural syllabus which he is taught, it matters relatively little in what order the material is taught to him. In other words, no constraints must be placed upon his freedom to discover the grammar of the target language in his own way, but we may sometimes actually help him to do this by bringing certain aspects of the language to his conscious attention.

I think it may be useful to consider how natural acquisition occurs as far as we know it. A knowledge of the grammar would appear to grow in response to communicative needs. Where these are minimal, the grammar may never grow beyond a pidgin level of complexity and it may well be the case that for many learners of second languages this is the level of complexity which is appropriate to their communicative needs. If this is so it is quite probable that this is the level at which fossilization will set in. When this happens, perhaps we shall one day succeed in persuading teachers that they have nevertheless been successful in achieving their pupils needs!

If however we abandon structural grading of the grammatical material, what principles of grading remain? The suggestion just made gives us a clue. The growth of the grammar is related to communicative complexity. The more complex the communicative needs the more complex the grammar must be to meet these needs. The appropriate grading then would seem to be in the communicative demands made upon the learner. Recent work done on the language used by native speakers when interacting with learners at different levels of knowledge show clearly that they adapt their speech quite sensitively to what they perceive to be the level of competence

of their interlocutors. This is a rhetorical adaptation, of course, but it does include amongst its various characteristics a selective element in its grammar. Exactly the same principle of grading has been observed in what is called 'mother's talk'. Now we know that this rhetorical adaptation is automatic in native speakers, who appear to have some built-in awareness of what is, and what is not, simple to process psycholinguistically. Teachers probably develop this awareness in a heightened form. It is not necessary or even desirable that teachers should restrict the forms they use in their interaction with their pupils to just those forms that have been prescribed in the structural syllabus. On the contrary what is or is not in the syllabus is almost irrelevant, as I have suggested. What is desirable if we want to develop most expeditiously the implicit knowledge upon which all communicative activity is based, is that the focus should be, not on form, but on communication, since these appear to be the conditions under which the implicit knowledge develops naturally.

In conclusion I find it somewhat heartening that the tentative results of second language acquisition research should point in a direction in which for quite other reasons the development of language teaching appears to be going. By this I mean the essentially functional approach which more recent proposals have adopted, together with the shift of emphasis from accuracy to fluency. These approaches which stress the importance of communicative activity in the classroom are likely to optimise the circumstances under which a functional knowledge of grammar will develop spontaneously. To the question: should we teach grammar? one can give the answer, yes, if by 'teach grammar' you mean no more than that activity which promotes a development of a functionally effective body of implicit knowledge. But it may not resemble anything we have hitherto thought of as the formal teaching of grammar.

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ANNUAL MEETING 1980

ABSTRACTS OF PAPERS PRESENTED

THE MEASUREMENT OF LINGUISTIC COMPLEXITY: PROBLEMS, POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS AND FURTHER QUESTIONS

This paper arises out of the Polytechnic of Wales project on the language development of children aged 6 - 12. One of the project's mains aims is to provide a broad, overall picture of development during these years of syntax and those aspects of semantics that are realised in syntax, and this has led us to a fundamental reconsideration of the established notions of linguistic complexity. After briefly evaluating current metrics for complexity, the paper proposes the recognition of five broad types of syntactico-semantic complexity each with sub divisions within it, which are relevant in any area of applied linguistics (and not just in child language studies). The paper is exploratory, and reactions to the ideas presented are actively sought, with a view to finding solutions to certain outstanding problems.

Robin Fawcett,
Polytechnic of Wales

SYNTAX IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE PERFORMANCE: SOME UNWARRANTED ASSUMPTIONS

This paper presents evidence to support the claim that there are marked differences in the way that second language learners and native speakers make use of syntactic structure, even when this does not lead to actual errors. Some further evidence is presented that suggests that commonly accepted beliefs about the role of syntax in language performance may be excessively biassed towards English. Other languages give rise to behaviour patterns which are strikingly different from the patterns found with native English speakers.
The implications of this for language teaching are discussed.

Paul Meara,
Birkbeck College,
London University.

COMPARATIVE CONSTRUCTIONS IN A PEDAGOGICAL-COMMUNICATIVE DESCRIPTION OF ENGLISH

The work reported in this paper is part of an attempt to determine the content and organisation of a pedagogical description of English that might serve as a basis for communicative language teaching. The main feature of such a description is that it should primarily be meaning-oriented rather than structure-oriented. More particularly, it should (1) provide a coherent and comprehensive specification of the range of meaning options available to the language-user; (2) state what situational and contextual factors influence the speaker's selection of one meaning option rather than another from within this range; and (3) demonstrate the relationship between semantic structures and their lexicogrammatical realisations. The grammar of comparisons in English will be re-examined within this framework. In particular, the traditional use of the concepts of 'inequality' and 'equality' to explain the semantic

contrast between -ER... THAN and AS... AS constructions will be reconsidered.

Keith Mitchell
University of Edinburgh

FORMS, FUNCTIONS AND LEXIS IN ENGLISH FOR COMPUTER SCIENCE - ABSTRACT

We present the results of a functional analysis of three computer science textbooks. Communicative functions such as description of algorithms, commentary on programmes, are described; the grammatical forms which they are "associated" with, and the lexis in which they are realised, are also given. We show: (1) that any given form appears in nearly all the communicative functions, and (II) that any given communicative function is realised in several different forms. We conclude from this that there can be no inherent connection between form and communicative function. We propose that there is an apparent close "association" between form and communicative function only when the grammatical function (ie the meaning) of a form coincides with the communicative function in which it appears. Non-associated forms can appear in a communicative function because lexical items are the formal markers of the communicative function. Therefore communicative functions must be realised primarily by lexis, and only secondarily by grammatical form. The implications of the findings for the teaching of English for Computer Science are considered.

Christopher Beedham, Meriel Bloor,
University of Aston

A FUNCTIONAL/SEMANTIC/SYNTACTIC ANALYSIS OF THE LANGUAGE OF CHILDREN OF SCHOOL AGE.

Corpora of the language of Brisbane children of ages 6, 8 and 10 years have been collected and analysed within a functional-systemic frame, using coding procedures and computer programs constructed for the purpose. The paper describes the language collection, the analytical procedures, and some of the outcomes of the analysis.

The same language collection and analytical procedures have been applied, in subsequent research projects, to the language of English-speaking aboriginal children who live in several areas of Australia. The outcomes of the studies indicate, to this time, both that the analysis yields a great deal of information directly applicable to teaching programs and that interrelated functional/semantic/syntactic analytical procedures identify areas in which the particular classification systems being employed should be further refined or extended.

The strategies being used to develop a program for teaching aboriginal children, using the output of language analysis, is briefly outlined in the paper.

P.F.Walker
Mt.Gravatt College of Advanced Education,
Queensland
AUSTRALIA

THE PROBLEM OF CASE FOR NATIVE AND FOREIGN LEARNERS OF RUSSIAN

The difficulty experienced by many L2 learners in learning a language with nominal declension, especially one with a case-system as complex as Russian, is well-known. This paper looks at the development of mastery of the case-system in native learners of Russian and at some of the strategies they appear to use (as described by Slobin, and tentatively proposed by him as universal acquisition strategies). Errors and strategies of foreign learners of Russian are contrasted with this, and appropriate measures in the teaching of Russian are briefly considered.

Rod Haden,
Edge Hill College of Higher Education
(formerly of University of Aston)

THE STRUCTURE OF EXPOSITION : LITERARY CRITICISM

In this paper an exposition involving literary criticism will be discussed. This is the most complex type of writing expected of students and requires their treating as part of the field (or topic) of their essay another text, i.e. the piece of verbal art to be discussed. Detailed analyses will be presented of lexical cohesion, conjunction, and theme in order to show how grammar and lexis encode the argumentation characteristic of this genre. Ways of improving the essay considered will be discussed in light of these analyses. Overall the approach is intended to illustrate the way in which a 'bottom-up' approach to text analysis can be pursued, so that consideration of the evaluation and teaching of writing can be firmly grounded in the language of student composition.

J.R.Martin
University of Sydney

THE SELF-IMAGE OF THE LANGUAGE LEARNER

This paper is a report of work in progress concerning the self-image of the language learner. In order to determine what the self-image of the learner is, use is being made of Repertory Grid Technique (Kelly). The paper outlines how the technique works and contrasts this approach with that of earlier work by Lambert and Gardner, Spolsky and Oller. Comparisons are drawn with the work of Cziko and the technique of multi-dimensional scaling.

Emphasis at this time concentrates on the learner's change in perception of himself caused by the use of a first or second language and the pedagogical implications of the findings of this work are drawn.

Susan Morris,
Birkbeck College,
London University.

CRITERIA FOR COMMUNICATIVE/INTERACTIONAL TEACHING TECHNIQUES

This talk discusses some simple criteria for teaching techniques using communication and interaction in the classroom, based partly on assumptions about second language learning, partly on experience with materials design.

Vivian Cook
University of Essex

SYNTAX AND SEMANTICS IN L2 READING: SOME DIFFERENCES BETWEEN ENGLISH AND SPANISH

This paper is on the role of syntax in second language reading. It is based on an experiment recently run on 9 English speakers who are 'advanced' learners of Spanish, and 9 Spanish speakers who are similarly advanced in English. The results seem to indicate that, contrary to expectations, one cannot talk of 'L1 behaviour' and 'L2 behaviour', as the two groups behaved, in some respects, in quite different ways. In particular, what emerges from the experiment is a greater attention to syntactic operations among the Spanish group when reading in their L2, in contrast to a remarkable consistency of attention to syntax and semantics among the English natives. It is this contrast that will be discussed.

Tony Bell,
Polytechnic of North
London.

L1 and L2-SPEAKERS' JUDGEMENTS OF GRAMMATICAL COMPETENCE IN TRANSLATION: A COMPARISON

For a given language, neither native speakers' L1-competence nor non-native teachers' L2-competence is without defect: the first group is unable unerringly to determine the acceptability of utterances, and the second group has similar problems. Against this background, the question is asked: how do non-native teachers of a language differ from native teachers of that language in their evaluation of the L2-utterances of advanced pupils? A numerically very limited investigation, carried out at the University of Liverpool, into the evaluations of examination translations from English into Dutch made by students who were largely native speakers of British English, indicates the following main areas for further enquiry:

1. The non-native teacher makes twice as many evaluation moves as the native teachers;
2. The competence of the non-native teacher is patchy;
3. The native teacher is less harsh than the non-native teacher.

3 especially has implications for the design of the grammatical component of pedagogical materials.

Michael Rigelsford,
Lecturer in Dutch,
Department of German,
University of Liverpool.

REWRITING A STANDARD DICTIONARY ENTRY IN VALENCY DICTIONARY FORMAT: A PRACTICAL EXERCISE FOR THE APPLIED LINGUIST

Valency theory, deriving from the syntax of Lucien Tesnière, has a potential application in language pedagogy because:
a) it can lead to the identification of the basic sentence-patterns of a language, thus aiding the course-planner, the teacher and the learner;
b) it helps in the explicit and detailed identification of the numbers and types of complements accompanying verbs (and certain other 'constitutive' elements).
After summarising the immediately relevant aspects of the theory, the paper will concentrate on application b) with reference to verb-valency, arguing

that learners may be assisted in avoiding both syntactic and semantic error if adequate information on the valency characteristics of verbs is available, that the descriptive framework of valency theory may provide help with determining the source of some interference errors, and that the theory may supply a metric establishing with explicit clarity the difference between concrete and meaphorical usage. Examples will be taken from English and German, but knowledge of German should not be crucial to following the argument. (The paper, as it has developed, will not specifically focus on dictionary entries as such, but the methodology for composing valency dictionary entries will in effect be presented.)

John Roberts,
University of Essex

THE IMPLICIT GRAMMAR OF FRENCH USED BY 12 YEAR OLD ENGLISH CHILDREN IN CARRYING OUT COMMUNICATIVE TASKS.

The paper describes the East Midlands Feasibility Study to establish criterion-referenced levels of competence in communicative French up to and including the provision at 16+ to be certificated by the East Midland Regional Examination Board.

The spoken language production of first year children is considered from the viewpoint of the appropriateness and success of the strategies implicit in their performance of communcative tasks. It is argued that meaning-based L2 language learning for communication enables learners to use their L1 language resources to construct a working model of the target language.

Roy Dunning
University of Leicester

STRUCTURAL SYLLABUSES AND THE YOUNG BEGINNER

1. A survey of the recent debate on structural versus notional/functional syllabuses, pointing out that there appears to be a consensus in favour of a form based syllabus at the beginner stage.
2. Questioning of this consensus on the grounds of both practical consequences and underlying theory.
3. A description of the Hong Kong experience of using a structural syllabus for primary English. We argue that a syllabus based on the forms of language can militate against effective English language teaching, because of the constraints it lays on both the materials writer and the teacher.
4. A radical alternative. It has frequently been stated that language teaching should derive from the interests and purposes of the learner. In the early years of primary school English is taught for no immediate purpose, so one needs to look at what children of this age enjoy doing. The product is an 'activity' based syllabus, where language derives from a variety of stimulating activities.

Ray Tongue
British Council

John Gibbons
Education, University of Hong Kong.

ANALYSIS OF NATIVE-SPEAKER EXAMINATION SCRIPTS IN RELATION TO GRAMMAR AND FUNCTIONS

This paper discusses an investigation into the structure of 39 written answers to a particular university examination question, the hypothesis being that there may be certain orthodoxies of approach on the part of the native speaker. The investigation has a practical aim: if such orthodoxies exist and can be made explicit to the overseas student, the peculiar pressure caused by a combination of writing to time and deficient language may be alleviated.

The procedure with attendant problems will be discussed and results of particular interest from the data will be presented.

While any conclusions drawn in the above context are necessarily only valid for the limited data in question, this investigation forms part of a larger project looking at examination answers in response to a number of different types of question in a number of different disciplines, from which it is hoped that useful generalisations may emerge.

Gerard Greenall and Janet Price
University of Newcastle-upon-Tyne.

RESEARCH REPORT

THE LINGUISTIC MINORITIES PROJECT

The project is based at the Institute of Education, London University, and is funded by the Department of Education and Science. It has a three-year duration and started on 1st September 1979.

The staff of the project are:

Director:	Verity Saifullah Khan
Research Officers:	Marilyn Martin-Jones
	Anna Morawska
	Euan Reid
	Greg Smith
Project Secretaries:	Jennifer Norvick
	Mee Lian Yong

The overall aim of the project is to provide an account and analysis of the changing patterns of bilingualism in several regions of England. The project covers a range of minority languages, including those from South and Eastern Europe, South and East Asia. The research is being carried out among children, young people and adults both in and out of school. The work in schools will involve collaboration between the L.M.P. and about eight Local Education Authorities.

The multi-disciplinary research team is using a variety of approaches, including sociolinguistic surveys and more detailed studies of patterns of language use and language attitudes. The Schools Language Survey is intended to document the range of linguistic diversity among all school children in a Local Education Authority and the extent of literacy in the minority languages. The Secondary Pupils Survey will allow a more detailed look at the language use and perception of language among secondary school children. The project is also collecting information on the existing provision for minority language teaching. This includes a small amount of teaching within the mainstream school system and an increasing amount of provision organised out of regular school time by the minorities themselves. The Adult Language Use Survey involves the use of bilingual interviewers from the different linguistic minorities interviewing a sample of adults in their mother-tongue and/or English. This survey looks at language skills and learning history, literacy, language use in the household, at work, in the community and attitudes towards language teaching provision. The more detailed case studies will focus on particularly interesting linguistic and educational questions studied in specific local contexts.

The Linguistic Minorities Project aims to develop and assess varied methodologies for the study of the processes of language change and shift. It hopes to stimulate further research and to contribute to thinking on both practical and theoretical issues in the fields of education and language.

July 1980

REVIEW: THE EXETER TAPES

General Editors,
C.C.Cameron & R.R.K.Hartmann,
Exeter University.

Language Study in Education, L503 (1976), David Scarbrough
How Do you Relax,L728 (1980) J. and S. Nuttall

The Exeter Tapes were originally conceived in the early 1970's as an aid to language learning, either as self-access material or for classroom use. They do not seem to be as well-known among language teachers and learners as they might be. There are now over three hundred titles dealing with a dozen languages, most of which are divided into sections dealing with language study per se, literature, and civilization. In the English Studies the section on language and linguistics, edited by J.Nuttall, yields some interesting titles. One can brush up on Chomsky's original grammar, treat oneself to a diachronic survey of the English language or even study 'ESP at Sea'. Only three titles are aimed directly at language practice; the rest contain didactic material of specific interest to students of language.

'Language' not 'languages', as David Scarborough takes pains to point out in his "Language Study in Education", although those who describe themselves as students of language would already be familiar with the contents of this tape. It is sometimes difficult for the linguist, working in the field of education, to realize just how many educators are 'naive native speakers'. It is to these unconverted that Mr.Scarbrough is preaching, teachers and student teachers who hold 'conventional' rather than 'linguistic' theories about language. He quotes the Bullock Report on how teachers must understand the nature of language in order to be able to control the growth of competence in their pupils, not only competence in foreign language learning but in any learning. The old adage of 'every teacher a teacher of English' is represented here. Since children need language, often sophisticated and complex, to know subjects they are learning and also to express that knowledge, the subject teacher is responsible for teaching the language they need, manipulation of necessary structure as well as lexis. An argument for ESP in mother-tongue teaching? It would seem so. Certainly it is an argument for teachers to examine the language they use very carefully and not to assume their pupils have it ready to hand. An important point David Scarbrough makes is the frustration and probable defeat experienced by teachers who do expect their pupils to be equipped with all the necessary tools of language to cope with new areas of learning.

For the unconverted, then, and for the teacher-trainer out to convert, this is a valuable tape. Linguistic terminology is clearly presented, though the author aims to show the need for language study rather than put forward any specific linguistic theories. His case for the application of language study should convince and his own style and speaking voice make for easy listening.

Among the new titles in the Exeter series are six tapes for listening comprehension. New material in this field is welcome, especially at advanced level where, although gaps are being filled in the field of academic listening, material on more general themes is lacking. These tapes establish a concept and a field of vocabulary through interviews with different speakers, whose attitudes and register vary. "How to Relax", for example, offers a variation in age, sex and accent in both interviewers and interviewees which increases both the difficulty and the authenticity of the material. The organisation of the material, however, could present some problems. Whether for private study or for classroom use, the lack of pattern in the questions and extracts could prove irritating and confusing. The student hears each of the three interviews followed in

each case by extracts and questions. When the questions precede or follow a fairly lengthy extract then there is a problem of memory span, even if frequent replay of the tape is expected of the student. No pattern is established as to the placing of the questions. Answers are given immediately which is a good point in private study, and they are amplified by glosses on difficult words or expressions. In spite of the comments on organisation, this is a useful answer to the regular question by the advanced student, "What can I take home and study?"

Valerie Quinlivan

NOTICES

UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM

MA. in APPLIED ENGLISH LINGUISTICS

(with particular reference to English for Specific Purposes)

Applications are invited for entry to a two-year sandwich course for experienced teachers of EFL (and in particular ESP), combining work in-post with ten weeks intensive study at Birmingham each year. Ideal for those able to obtain short-term release from EFL institutions at home and abroad.

Application forms and detail from the Registry, Faculty of Arts, University of Birmingham, P.O.Box 363, Edgbaston, Birmingham, B15 2TT, England. Further details from Christ Kennedy (ext. 2033 or 3646), English Language Research, University of Birmingham, 021-472-1301.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE RESEARCH JOURNAL

A new journal is being planned which is to be particularly concerned with teaching, learning and research in the field of English for Specific Purposes (ESP). The term ESP will be interpreted broadly so that a large number of practical and theoretical areas can be covered, which will be of interest to those involved in ESP.

Topics will include analysis of spoken and written discourse, computer text analysis, stylistics, study skills, and syllabus/materials design.

The first issue will be published in Autumn 1980 and the Journal will appear annually thereafter. Articles accepted for the first issue cover topics on programme design, specification of needs, analysis of written discourse, self-directed learning and integrative testing.

Contributions in the form of articles, reviews, research reports, and new items are invited. Further details may be obtained from:

Chris Kennedy,
English Language Research,
University of Birmingham,
B15 2TT

Tel: 021-472-1301 ext. 2033 (personal)
ext. 3646 (messages)

UNIVERSITY OF LONDON INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE (Head of Department: Dr.Geoffrey Broughton)

MA in Language and Literature in Education : EFL

(Course co-ordinators: Professor Henry Widdowson and C.J.Brumfit)

Applications are invited for the one year, full time MA course from experienced graduates or trained teachers. The course integrates theoretical studies of language and education with a direct concern for problems of application. There is a taught course of up to 10 hours a week, and a dissertation in which students explore, with guidance, an area of major personal interest.

Details from: The Deputy Academic Registrar (Advanced Studies), University of London Institute of Education, 20 Bedford Way, London WC1H 0AL.

NOTICES (continued)

ROUTLEDGE & KEGAN PAUL are publishing a series of books on LANGUAGE, EDUCATION AND SOCIETY under the general editorship of Michael Stubbs (University of Nottingham). The following is a statement of editorial intent.

The series will consist of books of high quality in the areas of language in education, language in society, educational linguistics and socio-linguistics. No standard format for the books is planned: this will depend on the nature of the project. It is envisaged that some books will be textbooks aimed at students in related disciplines, education, sociology, psychology, language study and linguistics; others may be predominantly practical, aimed at teachers; others may be more advanced monographs reporting recent research; others may be collections of articles.

Important topics which would be suitable for consideration in the series includes, for example: the development of children's spoken and written language; the teaching of reading and writing; the relation of language and literary studies in schools; the relation of mother tongue and foreign language teaching; language in the classroom; the regional, social and ethnic diversity of present-day English; the language problems of immigrant groups in Britain and other countries; societal multilingualism; historical studies of the changing place of language and languages in the education system. But suggestions of other topics are also welcome.

Prospective contributors are invited to write in the first instance to the general editor, Dr. Michael Stubbs, Department of Linguistics, University of Nottingham, NG7 2RD.

Please send correspondence and contributions for future issues to:

C.J.Brumfit, University of London Institute of Education, 20 Bedford Way, London WC1H 0AL.