

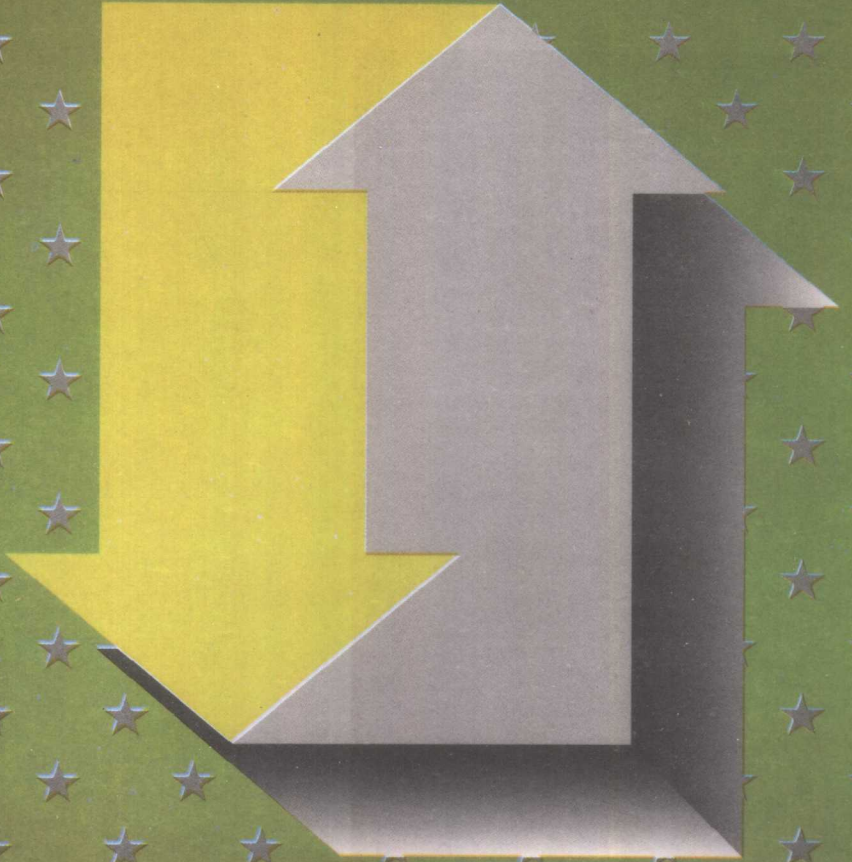
外语教学 与学习

—理论与实践
(英汉对照)

LANGUAGE
TEACHING &
LEARNING
FROM THEORY
TO PRACTICE

(英) 马丁·韦德尔

(中) 刘润清



高等教育出版社

LANGUAGE TEACHING & LEARNING
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高等教育出版社

1995年

外语教学与学习:理论与实践 / (英) 韦德尔(Wedell, M.), 刘润清编著。-北京:高等教育出版社,1995 (2001 重印)

ISBN 7-04-005248-2

I. 外… II. ①韦… ②刘… III. 外语-语言教学-教学研究 IV. H3

中国版本图书馆 CIP 数据核字 (95) 第 00985 号

出版发行 高等教育出版社

社 址 北京市东城区沙滩后街 55 号

邮政编码 100009

电 话 010-64054588

传 真 010-64014048

网 址 <http://www.hep.edu.cn>

经 销 新华书店北京发行所

印 刷 高等教育出版社印刷厂

开 本 850×1168 1/32

版 次 1996 年 3 月第 1 版

印 张 17.75

印 次 2001 年 2 月第 3 次印刷

字 数 460 000

定 价 25.00 元

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说 明

马丁·韦德尔是受英国文化委员会派遣来华的专家，先后在广州外国语学院和北京外国语学院任教。他在北外任教时，我与他共同主持了应用语言学硕士研究生的教学项目。我们二人在近四、五年内教的课程相似，培养的学生也相近，主要教应用语言学硕士研究生或进修教师的普通语言学、应用语言学、外语教学法、语言测试和教材评估等。我们有个共同的感觉：相当一部分中国教师认为，只要英语水平高，就能教好英语，无需学习什么教学法，更用不着什么语言学理论。

我们深深感到，有必要针对中国学员的特点，编写一本适合中国情况的外语教学理论的书。类似的书，英美等国已经出版不少，但中国读者很少能读到。即使得到一本，在无人指导的情况下也难以读得下去。况且，大部分此类书籍是给本族人编写的，是以西方文化为背景，不可能指望它们专门讨论中国读者的特殊问题。经过反复讨论，我和马丁决定给中国外语教师、师范生和应用语言学研究生编一本教材。

我们首先讨论了一个题纲，也就是大的章节的内容。之后，马丁着手用英文编写各章。他写一章，我改一章，提出修改意见，尤其是中国读者最关心的问题。然后，他进行修改，修改后，我再读一遍，再次修改。全部定稿之后，我又将全书译成汉语。翻译过程，又对英文稿进行了少部分修改。我们用英汉两种文字出版，主要是为了满足更多的读者的需要。英语稿使读者熟悉这种文献的用语和文体，以便顺利进入阅读原著的阶段。汉语稿既帮助懂英语的读者加深理解，又为其他读者提供阅读材料。所谓译文，并非逐字

逐句的翻译，而是保持原文意义、符合汉语习惯的文字叙述。

本书的读者主要包括：大学英语教师、语言学研究生和教师培训学员等；其他外语语种的大学生、中小学英语教师和师范专科学校的高年级学生，都可以参考使用。

由于我们水平有限，时间仓促，可能有不当之处。成稿之后，马丁离开了中国。后期的工作主要由我负责，所以其中的缺点错误，我负主要责任。敬请读者不吝赐教。

北京外国语学院

刘润清

1992年

INTRODUCTION

1. The Purpose of the Book.

There are hundreds of millions of language learners around the world, who learn using a variety of widely differing methods. Some methods focus on written language, others on spoken; some emphasize accurate reproduction of grammatically correct sentences, others fluent communication; some demand that the teacher always be in complete control, others that the learners take responsibility for their own learning; some view error with terror, others see it as natural. Academics, Education Ministry officials and Course and Materials writers in different countries tend to favour a particular method and insist that teachers and students follow it. But which method is best? Can any method be best in all circumstances? This book aims to consider these questions from the point of view of Psycholinguistics and Second Language Acquisition (SLA). It thus aims to try and link theory to practice.

Research into Psycholinguistics and SLA is concerned with trying to discover the mental processes that language users go through in order to understand and produce any language, or to learn a second language. The evidence from such research can, it is hoped, provide a clearer picture of the nature of language and of language learning. Such a picture should help those engaged in language learning and teaching to see what

factors need to be considered if they are to teach/learn a language effectively. Most of the work in this field has been done in English speaking countries, especially the United States. As a result the language that has been most closely studied is English. However, we feel that what the research evidence suggests about the nature of the English language and how it may best be learned is relevant to languages and language learning in general.

2. How the Book Is Organised ?

Chapter 1 outlines, in brief, the development of language teaching methods in the West over the past 500 (and especially the last 100) years. From this it can be seen how attitudes to what should be taught and how it should be taught have varied, and how some of the methods still in use are by no means new. This chapter then looks at what is, in fact, meant by the term 'Method'. Broadly following Richards and Rodgers (1986), a Method is defined as:

the ideas about the nature of language and about how learning takes place that are the basis for decisions made about the syllabus, the materials, and what should happen in the classroom.

Since the view taken of language and of learning directly affects all other aspects of language teaching, it is important, for those involved in language teaching, to have as clear an understanding as possible of the nature of language and language learning.

Chapters 2 to 5 try to show what the evidence from psycholinguistic research suggests about both the nature of language and what should and should not be done in order to help language learning take place. Each chapter considers the practical implications of the research for language learning and teaching. Chapter 6 summarises the implications of the psy-

cholinguistic evidence for the teaching of the language structure and language skills.

Chapters 7 to 9 deal with various branches of SLA research; the differences and similarities between first and second language acquisition, the role of formal classroom teaching and the effects on learning of learners' individual differences. Chapter 10 summarises the implications.

Any change in language teaching also requires different language tests and in Chapter 11 implications for Language Testing are considered.

Chapter 12 looks at the assumptions about the nature of language and learning that underlie some commonly used methods, and at the extent to which these assumptions match the evidence provided by psycholinguistic and SLA research. The book concludes by considering what questions need to be asked by anyone planning a course of L2 learning, and illustrates how these might be answered for a specific group of Chinese learners.

Before reading Chapters 2 to 5 and 7 to 9, it is suggested that time is spent on the questions that are posed at the beginning of each. The questions relate to the main points covered and brief answers to them are given in the summary at the end of the chapters. Possible ways of using the questions are:

a) as pre-reading questions to discover what the readers already know about the topics to be covered; to activate the readers' general knowledge.

b) to provoke discussion and speculation about aspects of the language comprehension, production and learning processes that readers may not previously have thought about.

c) to provide a purpose for reading the chapter and a focus for post-

reading discussion.

3. Who Is the Book for?

The book is intended for anyone who is involved, directly or indirectly, on a day to day basis, in the teaching of foreign languages or the training of foreign language teachers at Middle Schools, Normal Colleges or Universities. It is not aimed at specialist linguists, let alone specialist Psycholinguists, and does not therefore claim to be an in-depth study of every area of language processing and production, learning and acquisition. These by their very nature are controversial areas that will, no doubt, continue to be argued over by interested academics for years to come. The book discusses the data provided by a number of previous surveys of the field and focuses on what such data can tell us about the nature of language and learning, and thus its implications for the teaching and learning of foreign languages. The book is essentially a practical book, and although some discussion of underlying linguistic and applied linguistic theory cannot be avoided, this is kept to a minimum.

前 言

1. 编写目的

世界上有为数众多的外国语言学习者，使用的学习方法是多种多样的。有些方法注重书面语言，有的注重口头语言；有的强调说出的句子必须语法正确，有的则强调交际起来要流利；有的主张教学大纲必须适应具体学生的需要，有的主张用一套大纲可应付各种学习者。有的要求教师完全控制一切教学环节，有的则认为学生对自己的学习负有责任；有的把学习中的错误视为洪水猛兽，有的则认为学习者犯些错误是天经地义的。各国的研究者、教育官员、课程设计者和教材编写者，各自倾向于某种教学方法，并要求教师和学生都采用这种方法。然而，哪一种方法最好呢？一种方法能否在一切情况下都是最佳选择呢？本书试图从心理语言学的角度，用第二语言习得的理论，探讨以上问题，把理论和实践结合起来谈。

心理语言学和第二语言习得的理论，都试图发现语言使用者在产生语言、理解语言、或学习第二语言时的心理过程。这些学科研究出的证据或许能够使我们更清楚地认识到语言的本质是什么，语言学习的本质又是什么。有了这种认识能够使语言教师和语言学习者看到，要想有效地教授学习一种语言，必须考虑哪些因素。这个领域的研究工作大都是在讲英语的国家进行的，尤其是在美国。所以，研究最彻底的语言是英语。不过，我们认为，有关英语本质和英语学习的研究证据，同样可为其他语言的教学和学习所借鉴。

2. 本书的结构

第一章简述500年来西方语言教学方法的发展变化，特别是近100年来的发展。从中可以看到，对待应该教什么和如何教等问题的态度是如何不断变化的，而且目前仍在使用之中的某些方法并不是什么新发现。之后，本章讨论了什么是“教学法”。按照理查德和罗杰斯（1986）的看法，教学法是

“关于语言本质和如何学习的看法，这些看法是决定教学大纲、教材和课堂活动的基础。”

由于对语言和语言学习的看法直接影响到语言教学的其他一切方面，所以从事语言教学的人员应该尽可能清楚地认识语言的本质和语言学习的本质。

第二、三、四、五章讨论心理语言学研究中的证据，以及这些证据对认识语言本质的启示，进而探讨为了促进语言学习应该做什么，不应该做什么。每章都具体论述了心理语言学的有关研究对语言教学和学习的实际意义。第六章总结了前四章的内容，突出了心理语言学研究对语言结构和语言技能教学有什么实际意义。

第七、八、九章讨论第二语言习得理论研究的各个方面：第一语言习得的区别和相同点；正式课堂教学的作用；学习者个人差异对语言学习的影响等。第十章总结了这些研究的实际意义。

语言教学法的变化要求语言测试也相应变化。第十一章讨论了有关语言测试的基本问题。

第十二章研究目前最流行的几种教学法如何看待语言本质和语言学习本质，以及这些看法在何种程度上符合心理语言学和第二语言习得的研究成果。最后，本书举了外语课程设计人员要考虑的问题，以及对中国学习者来说，这些问题应该如何处理。

第二章至第五章和第七章至第九章之前，都设计了思考题。在

读每章之前，最好花些时间考虑一下这些问题。思考题针对每章的主要内容而设计，并且可以在每章小结中找到答案。使用思考题可以达到以下目的：

1. 发现读者对本章内容已经知道多少，调动读者的一般常识。
2. 对语言理解、语言产生和学习过程等某些从未想到的问题，启发读者去讨论和猜测。
3. 使读者阅读每章时都有明确的目的，读完之后讨论起来有重点议题。

3. 本书的读者

本书适用于在中学、师专、师范学院、师范大学中与外语教学或外语师资培训有直接或间接关系的一切人员。本书不是为语言学家而写，更不是为心理语言学家所作，所以在语言理解、语言产生、语言学习或习得各个方面，并没有作深刻的研究。这些问题就其性质来讲都是有争议的，而且无疑会在学术界继续争论多年。本书只讨论了已经进行的有关调查所提供的材料，重点论述了这些材料对语言本质和语言学习的揭示，以及对语言教学和学习的启示。从基本上讲，本书是一本实用性的书；虽然不可避免地涉及到一些语言学和应用语言学知识，但其分量极小，不至于影响读者的理解。

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1

APPROACHES AND METHODS: 500 YEARS OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING IN THE WEST

1.1 A Brief History of Foreign Language Teaching in the West

600 years ago the most important foreign language taught and learned in Western Europe was Latin. Due to its long history and its connection with the culture of the classical period, Latin had high prestige and many practical uses, and was therefore thought to be a suitable language for the (very few) educated people of the period to learn. It was used domestically in most parts of Europe as the language of education and government and was also the international language of religion, politics and business. How it was taught is uncertain, but from the many contexts in which it was used it is clear that both the written and spoken forms of the language must have been learned.

The political changes in Europe, during the 15th and 16th centuries, which saw the development of powerful nation states, first Portugal and Spain and then France and Britain, led to a decline in the use of Latin for domestic purposes in favour of the national languages. It retained some of its role as the language of religion and formal international diplomacy however, and its prestige as the language of literature and philosophy ensured that it continued to be taught to all educated people. Now, however, with its practical functions diminished, in most cases only the ability to read Latin was considered necessary.

The way Latin was taught then, (and continued to be taught until the mid 20th century), was an early form of the *GRAMMAR TRANSLATION METHOD*. When, between the 17th and the early 19th centuries, 'Modern' Languages such as English, French and German began very slowly to be taught in schools and universities, the main teaching method adopted was the one used to teach Latin. The aim was to teach students to understand (read and translate) the written language. The grammatical rules were explained and model sentences and vocabulary lists were given. The grammatical rules were practised by exercises consisting first of sentences and later texts, to be translated into and out of the foreign language. The sentences in such exercises (e.g. *The pen of my aunt is in the garden.*) were constructed to give practice in using grammatical rules, not to practise using language in a meaningful way. It was assumed that if learners could manipulate the rules they would be able to read the language.

Of course, throughout this period there were always some people who learned foreign languages in order to speak them as well as to read them. Thus, as early as the 17th century, there were attempts to design teaching materials which presented foreign language in dialogues set in

the sorts of situational contexts appropriate to the times (e.g. At the Coffeehouse). But it was only in the middle of the 19th century, with the development of the railways and telegraph making communications within Europe far easier, that the demand for oral as well as reading proficiency in foreign languages increased rapidly.

As a result, linguists and language teachers in the second half of the 19th century began to cooperate to try and develop a methodology for foreign language teaching that would be based on a scientific study of language and a study of how people learned. In Britain the Reform Movement linguists emphasised the study of phonetics and were responsible in the 1880s for the design of the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA), which meant that, for the first time, the sounds of all languages could be systematically compared.

In France and Germany during the same period the first method to be called such, The *DIRECT METHOD*, was developed. This advocated that second language learning should take into account what was known of first language learning. The focus should be on the spoken language and only the language being learned (hereafter called the second language or L2) should be used in the class. The language introduced should be 'everyday language' — common structures and frequently used vocabulary, and learners should practise it by actively using the language in the classroom. By the early 20th century the Direct Method had been officially adopted in French and German schools.

Meanwhile in the USA, the school system continued to emphasise learning to read the written language only. In Britain the same was true. However, linguists like Sweet, Palmer and Hornby continued working to develop a proper foreign language teaching method that would systematically teach the structure of the language in realistic and meaningful

contexts.

When the USA entered the Second World War it suddenly became clear that oral skills in foreign languages were necessary for American soldiers posted all over Asia and Europe. For a teaching method the authorities turned to the Structural Linguists to provide a scientific description of language and to the Behaviourist Psychologists to set out a scientific description of learning. The result of their cooperation became known as the *AUDIOLINGUAL METHOD*. This method also saw the spoken language as the fundamental form of language and insisted that only the L2 should be used in the classroom. It divided up language into parts, each representing an item within the system of L2 structures. Learners learned the language item by item, never moving on from one item until they could reproduce it perfectly in a variety of classroom drills. Errors were not tolerated; the accurate production of correct language structures was seen as more important than being able to produce meaningful sentences. The underlying assumption (similar to the Grammar Translation Method except that now spoken language was emphasised) was that if learners knew the structure of the language thoroughly, they would automatically be able to use the structure to understand and express meaning.

For at least 20 years the Audiolingual Method was widely used in the USA and American-influenced foreign language learning environments around the world. By the mid 1960s, however, it became clear that knowledge of the structure rules was, alone, insufficient preparation for actually using the language in real life situations.

Paralleling the Audiolingual Method in the 1950s and 60s, were the *ORAL* and *SITUATIONAL METHODS*, developed in Britain as a result of decades of work by British linguists. These methods also emphasised

the spoken language and stressed structural accuracy. In addition, however, they stressed the need to present language in natural situational contexts, if learners were to be able to use the structures that they learned.

Developing from these methods, and in part as a response to the dissatisfaction with Audiolingualism, came the *COMMUNICATIVE METHOD* of language teaching. This method recognises that learners need to know the grammatical rules of the language, but stresses that the purpose of learning such rules is to be able to DO things, to perform FUNCTIONS (e.g. to ask for directions, to apologise, to thank), in the L2. The Communicative Method also acknowledges that different groups of learners study foreign languages for different reasons. Different groups, therefore, have different language needs which should be reflected in different syllabuses. It views error as a natural part of language learning. It encourages learners to use the language to communicate meaningfully as much as possible, even if this means making errors, in order to gain confidence and fluency in speaking the language. It sees both spoken and written language as potentially necessary for learners. If a particular group of learners is likely to need to use both the spoken and the written forms of the L2 in the future, the Communicative Method encourages the teaching of all 4 skills right from the start of a language course. The roles of teachers and learners using this method are potentially far more varied than was previously the case. Teachers, when presenting new language, remain firmly in control of the language that the learners use. When practising the new language teachers are supposed to relax control gradually, until finally learners are using the language they know more or less freely and normally, to complete some task or solve some problem in the classroom. Communicative language teaching too

has spread widely around the world.

Most recently in the 1970s and 80s the greater emphasis on learners as individuals who have different needs, different personalities and different learning styles has led to the small-scale introduction of a variety of other methods such as the *NATURAL APPROACH*, *THE SILENT WAY*, *TOTAL PHYSICAL RESPONSE* and *COMMUNITY LANGUAGE LEARNING*. These methods, mostly developed in the USA, stress the idea of the learner centred classroom. Here the learners are involved in designing their own syllabuses, and take at least some responsibility for their own learning. The role of the teacher in some of these methods is less that of organiser and controller; more that of advisor, syllabus negotiator and language resource. On the whole these latter methods have never spread very widely.

Figure 1

FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING IN EUROPE AND
THE UNITED STATES

15th TO 20th CENTURY: A BRIEF OUTLINE

Up to 15th century

Language taught: Latin —all skills; —method not clear

16th to 18th century

Language taught: Latin —reading & translation;
—formal teacher-learner relationship
—**Grammar-Translation Method**

18th to mid-19th century

Languages: Modern Languages — reading & translation
— formal teacher-learner relationship
— teacher controls all language in class
— **Grammar - Translation Method**

— Also attempts to teach speaking & listening in context
— **Early Situational Method**

Mid-19th to early 20th century

Languages: Modern Languages — reading, listening, speaking
— beginning to study methods

Europe: **Direct Method** — speaking & listening
— learning L2 similar to L1
— stress use & meaning of language
— teacher controls all language in class

USA/UK: **Grammar-Translation Method**—reading, grammar, vocabulary

Mid-20th century

Languages: Modern Languages
USA & many parts of the world — **Audiolingual Method**
— speaking & listening

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">— avoid errors, stress accuracy— teacher strictly controls all language
UK and some other places:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">— Situational & Oral Methods— speaking & listening— stress realistic contexts for language use— teacher controls all language
Elsewhere: Direct Method and Grammar- Translation Method	

1950's to 1960's

Modern Languages, especially English	
UK— Europe:	
Communicative Method:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">— all skills— stress fluent use of L2 in context— different learners have different needs— teacher sometimes allows free use of L2— error-normal part of learning process
USA & many parts of the world:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">— Audiolingual Method— Grammar-Translation Method— Direct Method— Situational Method

1970's to 1980's

<p>Modern Languages, especially English</p> <p>USA & parts of Europe:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Natural Approach — Community Language Learning — Total Physical Response — Suggestopedia — Silent Way <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — speaking and listening especially — learners are individuals with different needs and ways of learning — structure rules can be acquired as they are in L1 — learners should take responsibility for their learning — role of the teacher very varied — many similarities between L2 & L1 <hr style="border-top: 1px dashed black;"/> <p>Elsewhere: All other methods mentioned</p>
--

Today, as Figure 1 shows, we have the situation where all the methods mentioned are still in use somewhere in the world. Each of these methods has more or less different ideas about such matters as:

- a) what language is—
 - i) Language is primarily speech.
 - ii) Language is primarily writing.
 - iii) Language is both.
 - iv) Language is a system of structure rules.
 - v) Language is a system of structure rules that humans use to

DO things.

vi) Language is a system of structure rules and culture-specific social behaviour rules that humans use to interact with one another.

b) what knowing a language involves—

i) Knowing a language involves knowing the grammar rules and vocabulary off by heart.

ii) Knowing a language is knowing the grammar and vocabulary and how to use them to DO what is needed in the language.

iii) Knowing a language is knowing the grammar, vocabulary and discourse patterns and the L2 culture Rules of Use that together determine how it is appropriate to use the L2 in a particular context.

c) the best way of ensuring that language learning takes place—

i) Learning a language is most successful if the learners repeat and memorise the grammar rules and vocabulary until they know them off by heart.

ii) Learning a language is most successful if learners practise the grammar rules and vocabulary by using them to communicate as naturally as possible.

iii) Formal learning of a language is unnecessary. Any L2 can be acquired naturally in the same way as children acquire their L1.

iv) Learners should never be allowed to make errors or hear incorrect language.

v) Errors are normal in spoken language and should be accepted

when learners practise using the language.

- vi) The input learners get should be very strictly controlled for grammar and vocabulary.
- vii) Learners should be exposed to as much natural language of many different kinds as possible.

1.2 Approaches and Methods: The Basic Questions

If teachers want to decide which (or which combination) of the many available language teaching methods is likely to be most effective, it is important that they are as clear as possible about the answers to two questions: 'What is language?' and 'How do people learn languages?'

By slightly adapting Richards and Rodgers (1986), it is possible to say that all language teaching methods have an **APPROACH** based on a particular set of answers to the two questions above. This Approach will affect the **DESIGN** of the method; the syllabus and activities that the method recommends. These will in turn determine the **PROCEDURES** expected of those who use the method; what teachers and learners are meant to do in the classroom, what materials they will use and so what a typical language lesson is like.

Below is an example based on the Grammar- Translation Method:
APPROACH—

What is language?

Language is writing.

How do people learn languages?

They learn by memorising grammar rules and vocabulary. They practise by translating sentences from L1 to L2 and back again.

DESIGN—

- What should be in the syllabus?** The grammatical structures of the L2 and lists of vocabulary.
- What sort of activities?** Translation exercises from L1 to L2 and from L2 to L1.

PROCEDURE—

- What should teachers do?** They should explain the grammar rules and vocabulary, in L1 if necessary. They demonstrate model sentences. They supervise the doing and correcting of the practice exercises.
- What should learners do?** They listen to the teacher. They try to memorise the grammar rules and vocabulary. They do the exercises as told to by the teacher.
- What sort of materials?** Textbooks that contain the grammar rules, model sentences to show how the rules work, lists of vocabulary, practice translation exercises.
- What is a typical lesson like?** Teachers do most of the talking. They are in complete control of the class. One lesson is very similar to another. The learners listen to the teachers. They do exactly as they are told. They rarely talk.

It can be seen that the answers to the two questions about the nature of language and of language learning have far-reaching implications. If teachers can find accurate answers to these questions, and so decide on the correct *APPROACH*, it is likely that their *DESIGN* and *PROCEDURE* will also be organised so as to help as many learners as possible to learn foreign languages as efficiently as possible.

There are currently many different methods with many different approaches in use around the world. The main purpose of this book is to help identify which *APPROACH* or *MIX OF APPROACHES* will lead to the most effective *DESIGN* and *PROCEDURE* in a given L2 learning context.

1.3 What Is Language? Some Current Answers to the Questions

Before we go on to look at what Psycholinguistics and Second Language Acquisition (SLA) have to tell us about the nature of language and how it is learned, it is useful to look in a little more detail at some current answers to the two questions that determine the Approach of any language teaching method.

a) **The Structural View:**

Language is a system of structural items at different levels from phoneme to sentence. These, together with vocabulary, combine to express meaning. Each language has a finite number of such structural items to be learned, and any learner of a language needs to learn this same set of items. Learners need to know the sounds of the language, the rules for determining which sounds

can combine with each other in which order to form words.

They need to know the rules of word formation in the language and the grammar rules determining which words can combine with other words in which order, to form grammatical sentences.

When they know these rules and have learned selected vocabulary items, they know the language.

b) The Communicative or Notional-Functional View:

In this view language is seen as a system of structural items, similar to the above, which learners learn in order to be able to Do things (to perform FUNCTIONS) in the language. They may learn the L2 for social reasons, to be able to meet, greet and entertain L2 native speakers. They may need the L2 for their work, to negotiate contracts, to place orders, to present papers at international conferences. Learners thus learn the L2 structures in order to DO the things that made them decide to learn the L2 in the first place.

In order to perform functions, learners need to know how to combine the grammatical rules and the vocabulary in such a way that they express NOTIONS. By Notions are meant ideas such as the concept of Present, Past and Future time, expressions of certainty and possibility, the roles of agent, instrument and patient within a sentence, and spatial relationships between people or objects. Below is an example:

I am sorry that I was late last night.

Function = apology

Notions = past and present time; speaker as agent.

Didn't he use to be fatter than you?

Function = question/asking for confirmation

Notions = past compared with present

size relations

uncertainty

deictic reference

For those who hold this view of language, knowing a language involves knowing how to combine the grammar and vocabulary of the language to express notions that perform the functions that the learner wants to be able to perform in the language. Learners know a language if they can DO whatever it is they want to do in the language.

It is likely of course that different groups of learners will want to be able to do different things using the L2. For example, a group of learners in Beijing learning English to work in the restaurant of a large hotel, will need to be able to DO different things in English from a group of learners training to work in international banking.

Not all that they want to do will be different, but some things will be, and this view of language would not expect the two groups to have identical syllabuses.

c) **The Interactional View:**

This considers language to be a communicative tool, whose main use is to build up and maintain social relations between people, in whichever situation they find themselves. Learners, therefore, do need to know the grammar and vocabulary of the language, but as importantly, they need to know the rules for using them in the whole range of communicative contexts in which people from the L2 community interact. So they need to know

the rules for telling a story and how they differ from those for telling a joke. They need to know how the rules for talking to somebody at a funeral are different from those for talking to someone at a wedding. They have to understand how to modify their language when talking to someone of higher or lower status. People who hold this view would say that the learner needs to know the patterns and rules that exist both below and above the sentence level in any language. Such rules, both linguistic and social, together determine how a language is used in any social context that its native-speakers normally find themselves in.

These three views present an ever wider view of language. The Structural view limits knowing a language to knowing its structural rules and vocabulary. The Communicative or Notional-Functional view adds the need to know how to use the rules and vocabulary to do whatever it is one wants to do. The Interactional view says knowing how to do what one wants to do, involves also knowing what it is appropriate to do, where and when, and how it is appropriate to do it. In order to discover how native speakers use a particular language in different contexts it is necessary to study both the linguistic structure of the language up to and beyond the sentence level and the culture-specific rules of appropriate non-linguistic behaviour.

1.4 How Do People Learn Languages? Two Sets of Theories

There are a great number of more or less developed theories about how people learn their first and especially second languages. Such theo-

ries can, according to Richards and Rodgers (1986), be divided into two main groups.

a) Process Oriented Theories:

These emphasise the mental processes that it is thought a learner goes through when learning an L2. They are interested in finding out such things as:

- i) Do learners go through the same mental processes to learn the L2 as they did when they were learning their L1, or do they need to develop a whole new set of mental habits?
- ii) Do people learn more easily if they are taught L2 grammar explicitly or is it more helpful to leave them to work out the rules of grammar on their own?
- iii) Is it actually easier for the brain to cope with only the spoken language first, or only the written language first, or doesn't it matter?

b) Condition Oriented Theories:

These lay more emphasis on the teaching techniques and classroom conditions that need to be provided, in order to activate the learners' mental processes and so help them to learn. They are concerned with deciding on such matters as whether:

- i) Learners' L2 input should be carefully graded and only presented a little at a time or whether they should be exposed to a wide variety of input from the very beginning.
- ii) Learners should always be encouraged to understand every word that they read and hear or should be taught that they

often do not need to understand every word, to understand the meaning.

- iii) Learners learn to use the language more efficiently and easily with lots of drilling and repetition, or it is more helpful if they are given plenty of opportunity to communicate freely in the L2 in the classroom.
- iv) Learners should be exposed to only a single model of the language, through the teacher, or whether they benefit from being exposed to as many different models as possible.
- v) Learning takes place more efficiently when the teacher-student relationship is formal and conventional or when the relationship is relaxed and non-hierarchical?

Here too then, opinions about what helps learning to occur vary a great deal.

The present-day language teaching scene around the world is characterised by a wide variety of Methods having very different answers to the questions 'what is language?' and 'how do people learn second languages?' In the chapters that follow we will look at how it is thought that people understand and produce language and at current ideas about how L2 learners learn or acquire second languages. As we do this, we will use the evidence available to try and build up a clearer answer to the two questions above for ourselves.

SUMMARY

In this chapter we have said:

1. There has been an increase in the number of Language Teaching

Methods that are used around the world during the twentieth century.

2. Different Methods have different Approaches: that is different answers to the questions 'what is language?' and 'how do people learn languages?'

3. As a result of these different Approaches, Methods have different ideas of what language should be taught (Designs) and how the language should be taught (Procedures).

4. The trend at present is:

a) towards a view of language that acknowledges the need to know L2 structure and vocabulary, but only in order to use such linguistic knowledge to express meanings, to do things, to interact with other people.

b) towards a view of learning that regards learners as individuals with different personalities and different reasons and motivations for learning the L2. As a result, different learners are likely to go through more or less different mental processes when learning the L2.

FURTHER READING

J. C. Richards and T. Rodgers: *Approaches and Methods in English Language Teaching*. Cambridge University Press (CUP). 1986. Chapters 1-3.

H. H. Stern: *Fundamental Concepts of Language Teaching*. Oxford University Press (OUP). 1984. Chapters 5-6.

C. Brumfit and K. Johnson (eds): *The Communicative Approach to Language Teaching*. Cambridge University Press (CUP). 1980. Pages 82-99.

A. Howatt: *A History of English Language Teaching*. Oxford University Press (OUP). 1983. Chapters 11–14.

2

UNDERSTANDING SPOKEN LANGUAGE

BEFORE YOU READ THIS CHAPTER, TRY AND ANSWER THE QUESTIONS BELOW.

1. What do people mean when they say they 'understand' what somebody says?
2. What sort of knowledge do people need to have, to be able to understand what others say ?
3. When people talk to each other, how can the context in which they are communicating help the listener to understand what the speaker is saying?
4. Is it true to say that speakers always have some reason for speaking and listeners some purpose for listening?
5. In what ways are spoken and written forms of any language dif-

ferent from each other?

6. How should the differences between spoken and written language be reflected in listening materials for second language (L2) learners?
 7. Are all words in a language equally important for L2 learners? What does it mean to say a person 'knows' a word?
-
-

2.1 Levels of Understanding

What do listeners to an English sentence have to understand to be able to say '*I understand the meaning of that sentence*'? Partly it is a matter of understanding the meaning of the individual words in the sentence, so part of comprehension is the relating of sounds to words. But understanding a sentence also involves understanding the meaning that is added to the individual words by the words surrounding them; so a further part of comprehension involves knowing the rules that exist about which words may go with which in the language to form phrases and sentences, and how such word order rules affect meaning.

These word and phrase-sentence levels of understanding are seen by psycholinguists as a first level of understanding necessary for the comprehension of all spoken language. This level of processing is called the *Construction Process* by Clark and Clark (1977) and the *Structural Level* by Foss and Hakes (1978). Both suggest that at this level, what listeners (Ls) are trying to do, is to understand the proposition or propositions expressed by speakers' (Ss) sentences. By proposition they mean the subject matter of a sentence, according to its literal meaning. Normal sentences can express one or more propositions.

For example:

- i) *Apples are expensive.* (A single proposition.)
- ii) *Your coat is on the floor.* (2 propositions: *You have a coat. It is on the floor.*)
- iii) *It's cold in here today.* (2 propositions: *It's cold today. It's cold here.*)
- iv) *Those nice red apples cost a lot.* (3 propositions: *The apples are nice. They are red. They cost a lot.*)
- v) *Peter's friend Mark, who is a teacher, likes apples.* (4 propositions: *Peter has a friend. The friend is called Mark. Mark is a teacher. Mark likes apples.*)

At this first level of understanding then Ls try to understand the literal meaning of what Ss are saying.

Sometimes however, Ss do not want what they say to be taken literally, they expect Ls to understand the intention underlying the literal meaning. In such cases there is another second level of meaning to be dealt with: what Clark and Clark(1977) call the *Utilisation Process* and Foss and Hakes (1978) the *Intentional Level*. For example, if we look at two of the above sentences:

(ii) *Your coat is on the floor*—this could just be a literal statement of fact or answer to a question; but it could also be a criticism, a request or an order to pick the coat up.

(iii) *It's cold in here today*—again this could also be a straightforward statement; but in certain contexts it could also be understood as a criticism, a request for action, a suggestion to move elsewhere.

At this second level then, the Ls need not only to understand the literal meaning of what is said, but must also understand what Ss intend the literal meaning to mean in the particular situation in which Ss and Ls are interacting.

At both levels Ls are likely to need to use different areas of their knowledge. Not only their knowledge of the forms of the language, but also their knowledge of Ss and of the relationship between them, of the topic and what has been said already, and their General Knowledge and experience of the world.

Understanding spoken language fully may, therefore, involve two levels of comprehension. The first, requiring the comprehension of the literal meaning of what is said and sometimes a second level, in which the speakers' intended, non-literal, underlying meaning is established. The boundaries between the two levels are not of course rigidly fixed. As a result they cannot be strictly separated so that much of the knowledge needed, and many of the mental processes used, to establish second level meaning are also involved at the first level. The clearest model has been constructed for first level meaning.

2.2 First Level Meaning—the Literal Meaning

The Clark and Clark (1977) model suggests that in order to reach an understanding of the literal meaning being expressed Ls go through four stages, all of which involve processes that occur in the Short-term Memory.

a) Ls hear the sounds that Ss utter and build up their phonetic picture.

b) Ls try to identify the words represented by the phonetic picture and try to group them into constituents.

c) As Ls identify each constituent they simultaneously try to identify what proposition each constituent expresses or is part of.

d) Ls combine the constituents so that the propositions they express

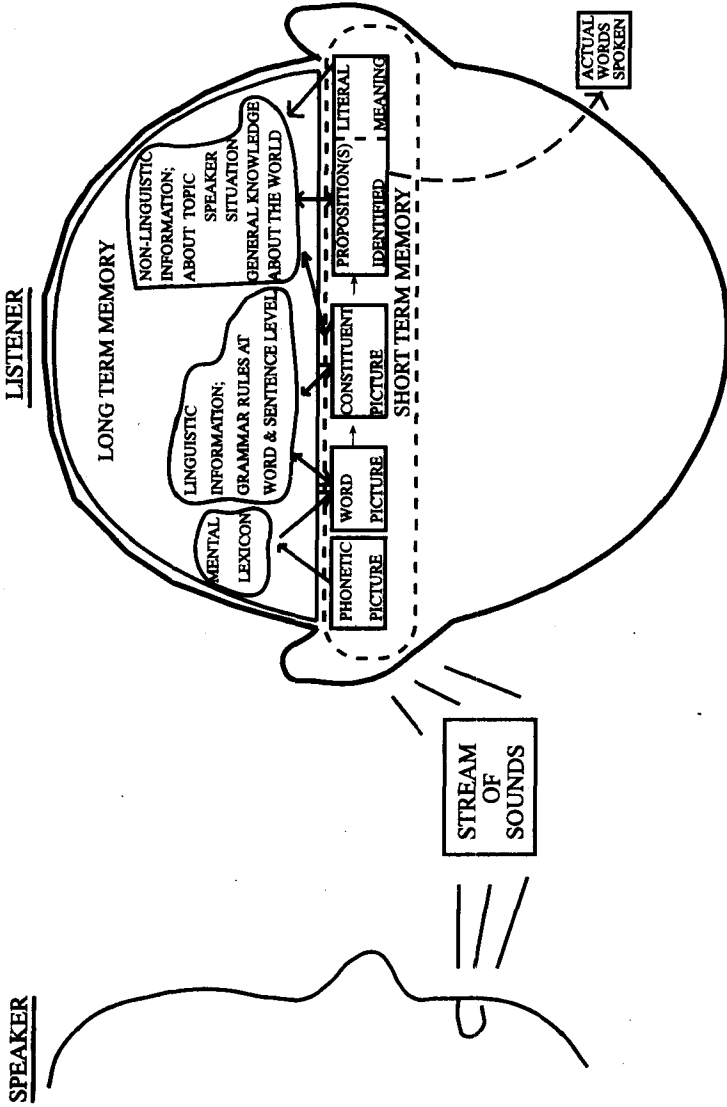


Figure 2 UNDERSTANDING SPOKEN LANGUAGE AT THE FIRST LEVEL

make literal sense. The literal meaning of the sentence is retained in the short-term memory, while the actual words used to express that meaning are forgotten. Finally the literal meaning is transferred to the long-term memory, leaving the short-term memory empty and ready to process the next sentence.

Obviously the stages do not follow each other neatly one by one, because natural speech does not consist of a sequence of single sounds or single words with pauses for Ls to process each one as it is uttered. What Ls hear is a stream of sounds that need to be processed and so it is likely that there is a lot of overlap between the stages.

Let us now look at each stage in more detail, and consider what it is that Ls have to do at each stage, to see what that can tell us about what language is like and about what teachers might do to help learning take place.

2.3 Building up the Phonetic Picture

The phonetic picture that people listening to an English sentence get is very different from the graphic image of the language that readers get when looking at a written text. Firstly, they have to build up their phonetic picture from usually only one hearing. Secondly the sounds in the utterance are unlikely to be produced word by word in perfectly grammatical sentences. Some of them are likely to be slurred and indistinct. Ss may express themselves unclearly, may hesitate or repeat themselves. Thirdly, as a result of the above, word boundaries will often not be at all clear. In addition, in fluent speech, any Ss in any language rarely pause exactly according to units of meaning and rarely use stress and intonation in a consistent way.

What the Ls are faced with, is similar to what readers would be faced with if they only got a single chance to see :

whenthasiangameswerinbeijin/theciticentewezverbussy.

As a result, when Ls listen to natural, fluent speech, they have to rely not only on their knowledge of the sounds of the language, but also on the wider context in which the Ss are speaking—the topic, what has been said before, who Ss are—to help them build up the phonetic picture of what has been said.

2.3.1 What does the delivery of spoken language suggest about the nature of language?

Natural spoken language (in English and any other languages), is less syntactically accurate than written language. If judged by the standards of written language, it may be said to be 'imperfect'. This is not a criticism, just a statement of fact. In addition to its frequent syntactic 'imperfection', native speakers' spoken language does not consistently and accurately follow the standard rules of pronunciation, stress and intonation. Sounds representing words merge into one another and pauses do not always occur between chunks of meaningful language. When listening to spoken language, Ls do not just listen to single sentences, uttered by chance by people they know nothing about. They listen in some kind of context and so usually have some idea of who the Ss are and what they are likely to be talking about.

2.3.2 What does the delivery of spoken language suggest about language learning and teaching?

a) Since written and spoken language are so different from each

other, the common practice of using texts originally written to be read, as input for listening comprehension is not helpful to the learners. Written language with its 'perfectly formed' sentences and density of meaning is unsimilar to most natural spoken language; it is too correct. If teachers want to base listening input on written texts, they need to adapt the written texts into notes covering the main points and then use such notes as the basis for a more natural spoken delivery.

b) If, as native speakers of their own language, people do not, in natural fluent speech, consistently use the stress and intonation rules that are taught to learners, teachers need to consider just how useful it is to spend a lot of time on teaching such rules to learners. It seems worth ensuring that learners can recognise the most common patterns; i.e. in English rising intonation often signals a question. However, too much time spent emphasizing rules that even native speakers apply inconsistently, would seem to be a waste.

c) Conversely, since spoken language is, according to the rules that apply to written language, 'imperfect', and so difficult for L2 learners to follow, the teaching of pronunciation, and of what the language sounds like in a variety of different contexts, is very important. Thus it is essential to demonstrate to learners that the sounds of the language are not uttered in a uniform way by native speakers, by letting them hear as many different native and non-native speaker voices as possible.

d) Language is always used in some kind of a context. Knowing what the context is, helps Ls to anticipate the kind of meanings that they are likely to hear. Listening input for learners should, therefore, also be set in a context. They should not just be expected to listen and understand, without any information about what they are listening to and why. (Context will be considered in more detail in Section 2.7 of this chapter.)

2.4 Building up the Word Picture

Native speakers of any language know thousands of words. The number of words known by a college-educated native speaker of English has been estimated very differently by different researchers. Estimates range from 216,000 (Diller, 1978) to 80,000 (Miller and Gildea, 1987) down to around 17,000 (Goulden, Nation and Read, 1990). The huge differences are accounted for by different researchers' definitions of what should be counted as a separate word and their different research methods. Whichever figure is accepted, it is clear that educated native speakers can recognise (when listening or reading) many thousands of words, but of these they actively use far fewer in their speech and writing.

It has been found that English native speakers can recognise the words that they know in as little as one fifth of a second, often before they have even heard the whole of the word (Marslen-Wilson and Tyler, 1980/81). If this is so, it seems that the words that we know must be very efficiently organised in our Mental Lexicon (ML), our mental dictionary. This ML is a very complex part of our brain. Relatively little is definitely known about its organisation and contents. We will, therefore, deal only with what is generally agreed on.

If we consider how English words could be divided up for organisational purposes, the first clear division is into a small, finite set of function words, very stable over time, and a far larger, more rapidly changing series of classes of content words. The organisation of these words has been studied using Word Association experiments where subjects are given a content word and asked to say the first thing that comes in to their heads. These experiments suggest that content words are stored in the ML in semantic fields, groups of words that refer to a particular area

of meaning (e.g. kitchen utensils, colours or kinship terms).

If Ls are able to match the phonetic picture of what they hear with words from the ML, a phonetic representation of each word they know must be part of the information stored in their ML. Ls then compare the phonetic picture that they have built up at stage 1 above, with the phonetic representations that they have in their ML until they identify the word they have heard.

As has been seen though, Ls often identify words very quickly, so their checking of phonetic representations cannot just be random. If it was, even with only 17,000 words to check through, identifying any individual word would take far longer than it does. Three factors seem to help Ls identify words so quickly. Two factors are interconnected. Words that are common in the language as a whole, and which have been heard recently, are identified most quickly (Forster and Chambers, 1973). Some researchers suggest that perhaps such words are held separately from less frequently occurring words in a kind of 'pocket dictionary', and are, therefore, easier to identify quickly. Others think that such words may be nearer the surface of the ML as a result of being used so often, and so are the first words to be checked when searching. Some words that are frequent in the language as a whole, will also be words that Ls have heard recently, but this will not always be true. A student of linguistics, for example, is likely to have heard words such as 'morpheme', 'syntax', 'deixis' fairly recently, even though they are not at all frequent in the language as a whole. Ls, therefore, find it easiest to identify frequently occurring words, whether in the language as a whole or in their particular area of interest. This is because they are likely to have heard them more recently than the other words that they know.

The third factor that seems to aid the rapid identification of words

in the ML is context (Meyer and Schvaneveldt, 1971). Words are recognised more quickly when they appear in context. This seems intuitively sensible, since the context of what Ls hear will immediately narrow down the range of words that can possibly make sense and they will immediately turn to those words in their ML and ignore all others.

2.4.1 What does research into the ML suggest about the nature of language?

a) All languages have very large numbers of words. Native speakers of the language never know all of them but have a Passive knowledge of (can recognise and give meaning to) a very large number. Of this large number they have an Active knowledge of (can actually correctly use) a smaller number.

b) Words can be divided into a small number of function words and a much larger number of content words. Content words relating to the same area of meaning seem to be stored together in the mental lexicon.

c) Not all the words in any language occur equally frequently. Knowing the words that occur most frequently in the language as a whole (structure words and content words for everyday items) and the words that occur most frequently in one's own specialist area and being aware of the context in which the language is being used, help Ls to understand natural spoken language. This is because the frequency of a word, the recency with which it has been heard and use of context to limit the range of possible choices, all help Ls to retrieve words quickly from their ML.

2.4.2 What does research into the ML suggest about language learning and teaching?

a) When teachers consider what vocabulary they want L2 learners to learn they have to decide whether they want their learners to learn a particular item at all and whether they want them to learn it actively or passively. Teachers need to be discriminating about the vocabulary they expect their learners to learn. Their decisions should, at least in part, be based on whether the word is frequent in the language as a whole, or in the area of language use that the learner will be working in.

b) If frequency, recency and context all affect how easily people identify a word in the ML, it seems that merely presenting learners with a list of words, giving one or two examples of their use and asking them to learn them, is not enough to make the words easy to retrieve from the ML. New words that are considered important for the learners to know need to be presented frequently in a variety of spoken and written contexts for a period after they are first learned.

c) The helpfulness of context, that is the language already heard, the topic, the speaker, in identifying misheard words, needs to be demonstrated. Learners do not need to hear every word to understand what has been said. Context can steer them in the right direction.

d) Since it seems that content words in the ML may be stored in semantic fields, teachers and learners should be aware of this and consider the implications for introducing/learning new vocabulary. Such new words might be grouped by topic (articles of clothing, parts of the body), or by meaning (ways of walking, ways of describing a person's appearance), or by base words and derivations (govern-governer-government-misgovern), or by hyponyms and subordinates, synonyms or contrasts. Any way of introducing new words that shows patterns, is likely to be more effective than just giving learners word lists whose words have no connection with each other.

2.5 Identifying the Constituents and the Propositions that They Express or Are Part of

As Ls identify the words represented by the sounds, they try and group them together into constituents. By 'constituents' is meant groups of words in a sentence that can be replaced by a single word which has the same syntactic function, for example:

- i) *'Your coat is on the floor.'* can be rewritten as: *'It is there.'*
- ii) *'Those nice red apples cost a lot.'* can be rewritten as: *'They cost a lot.'*
- iii) *'Peter's friend Mark, who is a dentist, likes apples.'* can be rewritten as: *'He likes them.'*

Sometimes a single constituent expresses a single proposition and sometimes, as in sentences (ii) and (iii) above, more than one. However many propositions a constituent contains, Ls, at this stage, try to identify two things almost simultaneously. They try to group the words they have identified into constituents, and then immediately try to work out both what propositions the constituents express themselves, and what larger, sentence level, proposition they are part of.

There are two theories or models that have been proposed to explain the processes listeners go through to establish literal sentence level meaning at this stage. These theories are considered below.

2.6 The Derivational Theory or Transformational Model

This theory, developed by Miller (1962), was based on Chomsky's

early (1957) transformational theories, which assumed that every sentence uttered has as its origin a Deep Structure proposition in the form of a simple declarative sentence. This proposition could, as a result of transformations, be represented in a number of different Surface Structure forms. For example:

DEEP STRUCTURE PROPOSITION:

(i) *Peggy climbed the mountain.*

SOME POSSIBLE SURFACE STRUCTURES:

(ii) *The mountain was climbed by Peggy.*

(iii) *Was the mountain climbed by Peggy?*

(iv) *Wasn't the mountain climbed by Peggy?*

According to this theory, Ls who heard (iv) would, in order to identify the proposition being expressed, have to reverse the transformation rules in order to get back to the original deep structure proposition expressed at (i).

If this is true, then each reverse transformation ought to take time and so sentences like (iv) should take longer to comprehend than (iii) or (ii) because they require Ls to make more transformations to get back to (i). In fact this does not seem to be the case. Ls can understand sentences like (iv), when heard in context, just as quickly as they can understand sentences like (i).

At the time that this model was developed, language was still being described purely in terms of form (The Structural View). It was not seen as a means of communicating intentions or of doing things. It is not surprising, therefore, that this model also fails to take into account that people choose the surface form, the mood and voice of their utterance for a purpose. In a passive sentence, for example, they may want to make the object the topic of the sentence [as in (ii) above], or they may feel uncer-

tain about something [as in (iii) above] or want to emphasise the agent [as in (iv) above]. Different possible surface forms of a proposition are, therefore, uttered by Ss for the purpose of expressing their intended meaning. When they are uttered in context, not as isolated sentences, they are often just as quickly understood as the original declarative statement. This theory was, therefore, soon abandoned.

2.6.1 What does the rejection of the derivational theory suggest about the nature of language?

a) Natural language production is not merely a matter of moving mentally from deep structure declarative propositions via transformation rules to the chosen surface structure form, nor is understanding language a matter of doing the reverse.

b) Language is always used for a purpose. Ss can express the same proposition in a number of different forms, and when they choose one particular form rather than another [e.g. (ii) above rather than (iv)] they do so for a reason, to achieve the intended purpose of their utterance.

c) The difficulty Ls (or readers) have in understanding a particular utterance (or text) does not always depend only on its structural complexity.

2.6.2 What does the rejection of the derivational theory suggest about language learning and teaching?

a) Language production and processing is not a matter of following a completely fixed series of mental manipulations. When using language people do more than merely go through predictable mental transformations. The use of structural manipulation drills in English teaching does

not give learners practice at using language in a natural way. Although such drills may be useful to provide initial practice in the use of certain important structures, they cannot, alone, provide valid preparation for real-life language use.

b) When teachers judge how difficult a listening (or reading) text is likely to be, they need to remember that structurally more complex sentences are not always necessarily more difficult to understand than simple ones. Teachers need also to consider the difficulty of the topics and ideas dealt with in the text and the degree of directness with which they are being expressed; will first level comprehension of the literal meaning be sufficient, or will learners need to search out the second level indirect speaker's meaning? Structurally complex texts, dealing in a direct way with concrete, familiar topics, may be easier to understand than texts that use simple structures, but deal with difficult topics in an indirect manner.

c) Learners should know that when they are trying to understand listening (or reading) texts, the speakers (or writers) are using language in the way they do for a purpose. They want to express a particular meaning. What the Ls (or readers) have to do is to try and identify that purpose, that meaning.

If constituents and propositions cannot be identified by returning, via reverse transformation rules, to an original deep structure proposition, how can Ls (or readers) set about establishing Ss' (or writers') meaning?

2.7 Syntactic and Semantic Strategy Model

The second model is known as the Syntactic and Semantic strategy

model. This suggests that Ls identify the constituents, and the propositions they express or are part of, by using all the syntactic and semantic clues provided by Ss when producing an utterance.

2.7.1 Syntactic strategies

Clark and Clark (1977) suggest that one of the ways that Ls identify constituents and the propositions that they express, is by using their knowledge of the grammar of the language. With this, they group words together into constituents and fill in any words that are not heard. But how are they able to do this, what clues does a knowledge of the grammar provide? We use English as an example:

a) If learners know the rules regarding the roles of function words and the most regular rules of phrase structure in the language, they can, on hearing one word, anticipate what they expect to come next. For example:

- i) If they hear a Determiner (Det) *a/the/some...* they know it is part of a Noun Phrase (NP).

If they know the most regular rules regarding phrase structure, they know: that a NP is most likely to consist of {Det} + N {Adj N/Adj Adj N}.

So, If they fail to hear one part of the NP, they know what part of speech they have missed and, using the context, may be able to identify what meaning it carried.

- ii) If they hear a preposition *to/at/in/on...* they know it is part of a Prepositional Phrase (PP); they know that a PP is usually made up of a Preposition and NP; they know the possible combinations that may make up NP, and so in the same way as above, may be able to identify the part of speech and

meaning of what they have missed.

b) If learners know the grammar and the word formation rules regarding affixation they can again, if they mishear a word but hear a suffix, identify what part of speech it is they have missed and use the context to try and identify what meaning was carried. For example:

- i) If they hear ... *then they _____ed it/ ... it was, _____ing in the corner*, they know that they have probably missed a verb.
- ii) If they hear ... *a _____al invitation/ ... she was the most _____tive woman I have ever seen*, they know they have probably missed an adjective.
- iii) If they hear ... *the _____ation is completed/ ... your _____ness won't be forgotten*, they know they have probably missed a noun.

c) Some content words also, especially verbs, do provide information about what is likely to precede and /or follow them. Such information can also help learners to identify what they have missed. For example:

- i) Verbs like 'hit'/'catch' will almost always have a NP before and after them: *They didn't catch the ball.*
- ii) Verbs like 'give'/'buy' are often followed by 2 NPs, the first usually animate, and the second usually concrete: *She gave the man an old coat.*
- iii) Verbs like 'put' are usually preceded by a NP and followed by 2 NPs one of which refers to location: *They put it on the floor.*

2.7.1.1 What do syntactic strategies suggest about the nature of language?

a) Language is strictly rule governed. Only certain word classes can come together to form constituents, only certain affixes can be used with each word class and content words, verbs especially, have rules governing what can precede and follow them.

b) Language contains a lot of grammatical redundancy. By this we mean that many aspects of the grammatical system, for example tense or singularity, are usually marked in more than one way. So below we have: *The cat lies in front of the fire.* — The singularity of 'cat' is marked both in verb and noun.

2.7.1.2 What do syntactic strategies suggest about language learning and teaching ?

a) If learners are to use syntactic strategies, in their listening comprehension they need to be clear about the grammar rules of the language, especially the most regular and generalisable ones. Thus a good grounding in the most regular sentence patterns of a language, the most common constituents of such sentences and the most common components of such constituents will be very helpful.

b) Students should be trained to identify the Parts of Speech that can fill the slots in regular sentences and constituent patterns. This will help them to use the syntactic context to construct meaning even if they miss part of a constituent.

c) When introducing new vocabulary, especially verbs, it is useful to highlight what grammatical items can and cannot appear before and after them.

d) The grammatical redundancy that is part of natural language should be pointed out to learners at an early stage, so that they become

used to looking for and using the clues which it provides (see discussion of redundancy in chapter 4).

e) All the above syntactic strategies imply the need for learners to be active listeners, who use all the available syntactic information to predict what is going to come next, and who, therefore, are able to identify the likely structure of any items they do not hear. Having done that, they will often, with the help of semantic strategies (see below), be able to work out the meaning of anything they have missed.

Unfortunately, although syntactic clues are available, often the function words on which they most depend are exactly those words which rarely receive primary stress and so tend to be 'swallowed' in natural speech. It is, therefore, necessary for Ls also to be aware of the semantic clues provided by spoken language.

2.7.2 Semantic strategies

In any natural spoken interaction between Ss and Ls, the Ls are likely to know something about what the Ss are going to say. This is so because the Ls can assume that Ss will follow two important principles.

2.7.2.1 Principles of interaction

a) The Reality Principle

According to this principle Ls can assume that Ss are talking about something Ls will be able to make sense of. Since Ls can assume that Ss are trying to make sense and are not purposely trying to confuse them, Ls can use their General Knowledge of the context to help them interpret what Ss mean. Among the General Knowledge they have in their long-term memory (see chapter 3), is information about what has been said already, about the topic being discussed, about the Ss themselves, and

about the situation in which they are talking. All this can help Ls to interpret what they hear. If Ss make statements that might be considered ambiguous, Ls interpret them in the way that makes sense in the context. If Ls mishear or fail to hear a part of what Ss say, they can assume that the part they have heard is meant to make sense in the context.

b) The Cooperative Principle (Grice, 1967)

This allows Ls to assume that Ss:

- i) are telling the truth.
- ii) are providing enough information for their intended meaning to be understood.
- iii) are saying things that are relevant to their intended meaning.
- iv) are expressing their intended meaning as clearly and briefly as possible.

Both principles stress that, most of the time, Ss WANT Ls to understand them. Ss are NOT trying to trick them. Ls can assume that Ss are trying to make sense.

This assumption that Ss want Ls to understand is very strong. Fillenbaum (1973/1974) asked subjects to listen to sentences like:

- i) *John dressed and had a bath.*
- ii) *John posted the article and then wrote it at the weekend.*

After they had heard them, he asked the subjects to paraphrase what they had heard. 60% of the subjects when asked to paraphrase (i) said they had heard:

John had a bath and got dressed.

When Fillenbaum asked them if they were sure that the paraphrase was what they had heard, more than half (of the 60%) said yes. When Fillenbaum pointed out the difference between their paraphrase and the original, they answered that they knew what the Ss meant to say and so

said it correctly.

2.7.2.2 The use of context

Ls can usually assume that Ss want them to understand, but they still have to work out what it is that Ss are saying. As noted above to do this they can use the context in which Ss are speaking.

a) Ls can use what Ss have said earlier to help them identify what Ss are currently referring to. For example:

Speaker: *Mary and George climbed Emei Shan last summer.*

(Listener may identify 2 propositions:

Emei Shan is something you climb.

Mary and George climbed it last summer.)

Speaker: *She photographed the peak and he collected plants.*

(Listener will be listening for words that refer back to the propositions identified after the first sentence.)

b) Ls can use non-linguistic knowledge that they have about the topic (see chapter 3) to help them comprehend what Ss are talking about. Bransford and Johnson (1972) carried out an experiment to show how important it is for Ls to know the topic that Ss are talking about. They asked 2 groups to listen to the text (adapted) below. They gave the topic of the text to only one group.

(Topic = Washing clothes)

TEXT: *The procedure is actually quite simple. First you arrange things into different piles. Of course one pile may be enough, depending on how much there is to do. If you have to go somewhere else, because you don't have the facilities, that is the next step, otherwise you are ready to begin. It's better to do too few things at once than too many. In the*

short run this may not seem important, but complications may arise and a mistake can be expensive. At first the whole procedure will seem complicated. Soon however it will just become another fact of life. It is difficult to foresee any end to the necessity for this task in the near future, but one can never tell. After the procedure is completed, one arranges the items into different groups again. They can then be put in their appropriate places. Eventually they will be used again and the whole process will have to be repeated. However, that is just part of life.

Afterwards the group that had been told the topic judged the text to have been quite easy to understand, whereas the other group found it quite difficult and remembered far less about it.

c) Ls can use what they already know about Ss to help them understand what Ss are saying. For example if an S says:

'Hullo, I just got back yesterday, any news?'

If L knows that S has been away in another part of the country for the past three weeks, and that before she left the unit for which they both work was about to secure an important export order, L will know exactly what S means by 'any news?'

d) In many languages Word Order is fairly consistent, and this also provides L with possible semantic clues.

For example:

i) In English certain sentence patterns are very common, e.g. SVO-SVOO.

SVOO is typically represented by NP1 VP NP2 NP3 and L can usually assume NP1= agent, VP = action, NP2= recipient, NP3=object.

- ii) In English, narrative events, instructions, directions and processes are usually expressed in the order in which they should or did occur.

I went there last night and climbed through the window and found him asleep....

You turn right at the traffic lights, take the second on the left...

The clothes are sorted into piles according to colour and then put into the machine, soap powder is added and...

- iii) In English when somebody is speaking they tend to start with the information that is shared with the Ls and so the new information tends to come towards the end of a sentence.

You know that book I mentioned last week, well it's the one by Foss and Hakes.

2.7.2.3 What do semantic strategies suggest about the nature of language?

a) Ss (and writers) use language for a purpose. They want Ls (or readers) to understand what they mean by what they are saying. It is rare that Ss try to trick and confuse Ls by what they say, and Ls can and do assume this.

b) The context in which Ss and Ls are communicating provides a lot of help to Ls in understanding what Ss are saying. During their lifetimes, Ls gather a store of General Knowledge in their long-term memory (see chapter 3). This knowledge is both linguistic and non-linguistic and will include information about all or some of the following:

- the sound system, the grammar rules and the vocabulary of the language being used
- the topic

- the speaker
- how the situation in which they are speaking may affect the meaning of what is said
- cultural factors peculiar to speakers of the language that may be relevant

All this information is potentially available to Ls, to help them understand the literal meaning of what is being said.

c) The grammar rules of a language at sentence level and above, can provide information not only about which items may go together to form grammatically correct sentences, but also about the meaning relationships between such items.

2.7.2.4 What do semantic strategies suggest about language learning and teaching?

a) Since contextual information is important in helping Ls to understand Ss, teachers need to make sure that listening input is not given to learners without first being put into context. If teachers give learners some information about the topic area, the situation, and who is talking to who, they are giving learners the sort of information they have when listening to their L1. With such information learners will be able, when listening to the L2, to anticipate to some extent what Ss might say, just as they are able to do when listening to their L1.

b) It is noted above, that Ss always speak for a purpose. Ls listen for a purpose. When teachers give learners listening tasks, therefore, they should give learners a purpose for listening. One way of doing this is to give the learners the listening questions/tasks BEFORE rather than after they listen to the input.

c) Ss in any language speak in order to be understood. Usually they positively WANT Ls to understand them. Learners can assume when lis-

tening to the L2, as they unconsciously do when listening to L1, that the Reality and Cooperative principles will apply. When listening to their L1 they do not worry if they mishear or do not hear every word that is uttered; similarly they need not panic when listening to L2. A way of demonstrating this to them might be to give them fairly simple listening input in which some content words are omitted, so that they realise they can still understand the meaning.

For example, in the text that follows there is one possible source of ambiguity and 5 content words are omitted. Before listening the learners are asked to listen for the answers to the following questions:

- i) Where did the man/woman need to go?
- ii) Why?
- iii) Why couldn't (s)he get there?

TEXT: *I went fishing down by the river this morning and suddenly remembered that I needed to go to the bank. I knew I'd have _____ if I ran along the bank to the city centre and then _____ the bridge. But I'd forgotten that the _____ was being repaired, so I couldn't get across there and so I reached the bank just too _____. So now I'm a bit short of _____, could you pay for the meal?*

Chinese learners to whom this has been given have rarely had trouble answering the questions.

d) The semantic meanings carried by common English sentence patterns should be highlighted for the students during the teaching of grammar as should common features of discourse organisation in texts with different basic functions.

SUMMARY

In this chapter we have said:

1. For Ls to understand what they hear, they need to correctly interpret the meaning intended by Ss. It is thought that there are two possible levels at which people may understand spoken language. Often it is sufficient for Ls to understand Ss' propositions (literal meanings) at the first level. Sometimes the literal meanings are not what is really meant. When this is so, Ls need to interpret the indirect, hidden meaning at the second level.

2. In order to understand Ss' meanings at either level, Ls need to use both linguistic (phonological, lexical, syntactic, semantic) knowledge and non-linguistic (contextual, general) knowledge. This is stored in their long-term memory.

3. In order for learners to be able to use their non-linguistic knowledge it is necessary for them be given some information about the context before they begin listening. Relevant aspects of the context may include who the Ss and Ls are, what their relationship is, where the interaction is taking place, and what topic is being discussed.

4. Ss always speak for a purpose. Ls can assume that Ss want them to understand what they are saying. People always listen for a purpose. Learners should usually be given a reason for listening before they start to listen to the L2.

5. Written and spoken language forms are not the same. Natural spontaneous spoken language, when judged by the standards of grammatical accuracy typical of written language, often appears to be full of 'errors'. Such 'errors' are in fact quite normal. The incomplete sentences,

hesitations, and repetitions that are typical of spoken language can be helpful to Ls since they mean that it is not usually necessary to hear every word in order to understand Ss' meaning.

6. Because spoken and written language forms are so different, texts that have been written to be read are unsuitable as listening materials. Listening materials need to provide a wide sample of different native speaker voices and speaking styles, to prepare learners for 'real-life' L2 listening.

7. Not all words in any language are equally frequent. Structure words and content words relating to everyday items and concepts are used most frequently in any language. Words relating to a particular field of study or interest may also be used frequently by specific groups of people. Users of any language can recognise more words passively than they can actually use actively. When deciding what vocabulary items L2 learners need to know, teachers should consider how frequently items are likely to be used and whether they need to be used actively or recognised passively.

FURTHER READING

H. H. Clark and E. Clark: *Psychology and Language*. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich. 1977. Chapter 2.

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S. McDonough: *Psychology in Foreign Language Teaching*. Allen and Unwin, 2nd edition. 1986. Chapter 4.

M. Garman: *Psycholinguistics*. Cambridge University Press (CUP). 1990. Chapters 5 & 6.

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3

MEMORY AND THE COMPREHENSION OF LANGUAGE

BEFORE YOU READ THIS CHAPTER, TRY AND ANSWER THE QUESTIONS BELOW.

1. What sort of information is stored in the memory?
 2. What are the differences between short-term and long-term memory?
 3. Is information in the memory organised or stored randomly? If it is organised in some way, how might it be organised?
 4. What affects how well people remember the verbal information that they hear or read?
 5. When people listen to or read sentences in any language, what information is most likely to be remembered?
-

In the last chapter we said that to understand the Propositional (literal) meaning of Ss' utterances at the first level and, more especially, to interpret Ss' intended, indirect meaning at the second level, Ls need to use information held in their memory. In their short-term memory (STM), they work out the first level literal meaning. In order to do this successfully Ls have to refer to linguistic information about the words and structures of the language and non-linguistic information about the topic, the speaker and the context. This information of both kinds is stored in their long-term memory (LTM). Information gathered in the past is essential for understanding of the present.

In this chapter, we will look at what is known about the capacity and working of the STM and LTM. Although we will continue to consider comprehension from the point of view of spoken language, some of our examples will be from written language and much of what we discuss will be relevant to the comprehension of both forms of language.

3.1 What Is Memory?

Throughout history various attempts have been made to describe memory in concrete terms in order to explain how information contained in the memory is organised.

In the past, memory was described in terms of a wax or stone 'tablet', similar to those used for writing on, before the invention of paper. Throughout life, all verbal and non-verbal experiences were, it was thought, accurately printed on to the memory 'tablet' as they occurred. As time passed, the wear and tear of life slowly erased the earlier memory images and such memories faded and eventually disappeared.

This analogy is clearly false, because it is not just the memories of

events furthest back in time that fade. Many people have vivid memories of things that happened or were said long ago, while some of what happened, or was said, last week, is forgotten.

More recently it has been suggested that memory is more like a tape recorder. Experiences are recorded as they occur. When people want to remember something, they just need to rewind the memory tape to the appropriate spot and there is the past experience they want. They may, of course, forget exactly where on the tape a particular memory is stored, or the tape may wear out or get tangled. In this case the memory may fade or disappear altogether.

This too, however, is not a good analogy, because storing our memories on a tape suggests that the past can only be recalled in the order that it happened. In fact when the memory is used as an aid to understanding the present, it is often the case that not just one past experience, but a selection of past experiences, some from long ago and some more recent, are recalled.

Access to the information in the memory thus needs to be flexible enough to allow a single relevant memory or a whole range of related memories to be located equally easily.

When comprehending (or producing) language, we are very quickly able to call on the knowledge in our long-term memory. The speed with which we can use remembered knowledge to help us understand new information, suggests that the content of our long-term memory must be very well organised. In this chapter we will consider what is known about how the information in our memory is organised, what factors are important in determining whether or not verbal information is remembered and the part memory plays in enabling us to understand (and produce) language.

3.2 The Role of Short- and Long-term Memory in Understanding Spoken Input

We have seen that when building up the meaning of a spoken utterance, in the short-term memory (STM), Ls end up with the literal meaning (not the actual words) of what has been said. However, the capacity of the STM is very limited (see below) and so, very rapidly, the meaning moves from the short to the long-term memory (LTM).

The LTM seems to have a more or less unlimited capacity for storing meaning. Stored there are all learners' remembered past experiences. Among the verbal and non-verbal information held there, are the Rules of social behaviour (including linguistic behaviour) relating to the learners' first language (L1) culture and, if the learners know other languages some of the second language (L2) rules too. The Mental Lexicons and the structure and sound rules belonging to the languages known are also stored there. So is information about the various topics with which learners are familiar, about the types of speakers that they are likely to interact with, and about the settings in which they commonly find themselves. The LTM is a huge complex store of inter-connected knowledge, constantly being added to as life is experienced day by day. All of this is available to learners as they try and identify the first level literal meaning. Learners also use this knowledge when it is necessary to look further, to interpret the indirect second level meaning. It is thanks to the help provided by the information in the LTM that Ls are able to interpret correctly what Ss say and, therefore, to respond relevantly and appropriately when, in a conversation, it is their turn to speak. Below is a very simple example of first and second level comprehension.

Scene: A classroom. Classes start at 8am. At 8am the teacher walks

in. Only 4 students out of 20 are present. It is a warm sunny day.

(i) Teacher: *Good morning, lovely day, isn't it?*

(ii) Students: *Good morning.*

(iii) Teacher: (looking at watch) *What time do you make it?*

(iv) Students: *The others are just coming.*

What do the students have to do to interpret the two utterances by the teacher? (i) is very straightforward. The students understand the literal meaning worked out in the STM. This literal meaning fits in with the context; the linguistic and non-linguistic information stored in the LTM enables them to understand the literal meaning and since it is sunny outside, and it is morning, what the teacher has said can be taken at face value. They realise that they do not need to look for any other meaning and so respond to the literal meaning. (iii) is less direct. When the students have understood the literal meaning, their knowledge of the world and of the situation, stored in the LTM, tells them it doesn't make sense because the teacher clearly knows what the time is. They have to use other non-linguistic knowledge stored in their LTM; knowledge about what time classes start, that students are usually supposed to arrive before the teacher, that the teacher may get angry with the late comers and so needs an answer that will reassure him that he will not have to wait long. Knowing all this they can interpret his question accurately as meaning 'Where are the other students?', and give a relevant and appropriate reply.

In understanding what is said therefore the literal meaning is deduced in the STM. Every meaning from the STM passes to the LTM and:

a) is checked against the knowledge in the LTM to see if it makes literal sense in the context.

b) i) if it does, the literal meaning is accepted, if necessary used as

the basis for an appropriate response, and added to the other information in the LTM.

- ii) if it does not, all the knowledge about the context of the utterance that is stored in the LTM is looked at, in order to work out the indirect intention underlying the literal meaning. This second level meaning is then used as the basis for any response, and added to the LTM store of knowledge.

We will now look in more detail at each part of the memory.

3.3 The Short-term Memory

Many experiments have been carried out to discover what and how much can be stored in the STM. Such experiments have commonly asked people to listen to lists of letters, numbers or unrelated words and then to recall them immediately after hearing them.

The best way to find out about what can be retained in the STM would be to do the experiments below yourself, using any other people you know. They can be done using English or any other language. The procedure is very simple.

- i) Give the Ls a piece of blank paper and a pen or pencil.
Do not allow them to pick up the pen.
- ii) Tell the Ls that you are going to read out a list of single-figure numbers. They must listen and try to remember as many of them as possible.
- iii) Read out a list of 9-10 numbers, e.g. 1 7 4 9 2 6 3 8 2 5 at a normal speed.
- iv) Immediately after you finish, ask the Ls to write down the numbers they can remember in the order they heard them.

- v) Do the same for a list of single letters, e.g. P C L V A F Z N D R and again ask the Ls to write them down in the correct order immediately afterwards.
- vi) Do the same for a list of unrelated words, e.g. box weather long pen hill after crisp study grey
Ask the Ls to write them down as before.
- vii) Finally do the same for a list of words that are related to each other, e.g. *It was early evening, and she sat at home near the stove waiting for the telephone to ring.*
- viii) Look at how many of each type of item the Ls remembered IN THE CORRECT ORDER.

Previous experiments have suggested that most Ls have an STM capacity of about 7 or 8 figures, and letters, and about 6 unrelated words. However if they are asked to listen to and remember strings of MEANINGFULLY RELATED words they are able to remember many more. This helps to explain why first level understanding in the STM is possible; the Ss always have a purpose for what they say and want Ls to understand them. They, therefore, speak in groups of meaningfully related words. Ls can hold enough of these words in their STM for long enough to work out the literal meaning.

3.3.1 What does research into the STM suggest about the nature of language?

The sounds and words of a language uttered in isolation can only carry very simple meaning, for example 'stop' or 'careful'. But these will only carry their intended meaning if Ls realise they are addressed to them. It is at the level where words are meaningfully joined into phrases and sentences that most meaning begins to be expressed. To be able to

use a language, mere ability to utter sounds or symbols representing the individual letters or words of the language, will not enable Ss to express much meaning or be understood by others. It is only when Ss are able to produce strings of meaningfully related words, appropriately set in a context that is comprehensible to Ls (or readers), that they can be said to be able to use the language.

3.3.2 What does research into the STM suggest about language learning and teaching?

a) Teaching learners isolated parts of the language system, carries no guarantee that they will later be able to combine them into meaningful written or spoken language. The teaching of sounds and words out of context (i.e. sounds without putting them into words, and words in lists) is likely to be inefficient if one wants learners to remember what is taught.

b) All input should, if it is to be remembered, be meaningful. Sounds should be taught in the context of words and words in as many different appropriate sentence level contexts as possible.

3.4 The Long-term Memory

3.4.1 Types of information

Information in the LTM is stored in terms of the MEANINGS understood from what has been experienced. Much of this experience will be closely connected to what has been heard (or read). This information is, it is thought, divided into two types. The first is called Episodic Information; that is, all the facts about everyday life and events that have ac-

tually occurred and can be chronologically dated. Examples of such information would be:

My mother was born in 1920.

The first man stepped on the moon in 1969.

I left his house at 6 o'clock this morning.

The second sort of information is the World or General Knowledge which we have already mentioned. This refers to facts and generalisations about aspects of the world that are not linked to any particular time.

For example:

Women have babies.

The sun sets in the west.

Don't make jokes at funerals.

This information of both types is constantly being added to, as we experience daily life and interact with others.

3.4.2 How information in the LTM is organised?

We have said above that the information in the LTM is an accumulation of all the verbal and non-verbal experiences that people have had in their lifetime. This is, potentially, a huge amount of information. In order to be practically useful it must be organised in some way. We will look now at ideas about how it might be organised.

3.4.2.1 Organisation into schema

People's knowledge about common objects and concepts in the world is, it is believed, organised into Schema. Schema are collections of knowledge about some specific concept. If people consider the concept 'HOUSE' for example, they are all likely to have a certain mental picture of what concepts they will typically find associated with a house.

A house is :

- a building.*
- it has at least one door and usually has windows.*
- it has rooms.*
- the rooms have walls, a ceiling and at least one door.*
- the building is usually made of straw, wood, brick or stone.*
- it is used as a place for humans to live in.*
- it is usually square or rectangular in shape and often has a triangular roof.*
- it is rarely less than 10 square metres, or more than 10000 square metres, in floor area.*

According to schema theory, somehow connected to the item 'HOUSE' in most people's LTM is some or all of the other information listed above. If they hear or read the word 'HOUSE', this other information automatically becomes available to them.

Brewer and Treyans (1981) tried to show that schema are psychologically real. They took 30 subjects into a room one by one. They told each one that the room was the experimenter's OFFICE. They asked each subject to wait in the room while they went to check if the previous subject had finished. 35 seconds later they came back and took each subject to another room. There they asked them to write down all they could remember about the experimenter's office. They expected the subjects' memory for what they had seen in the room to be affected by their Office Schema and so to include things typically found in an office. Of the 30 subjects, 29 remembered chairs, a desk and walls; all of which were true. 9 subjects remembered books, typical of an office schema but not in this office. 8 remembered a skull, a typical of offices but actually present. Subjects' memories of what they had seen did seem to be affected by

their Office Schema, their expectation of what they would see in that setting.

3.4.2.2 The organisation of items within a schema into natural categories

Items within a schema, for example a 'chair' or a 'desk' in the office schema, are not absolute. There are more or less typical examples of the category 'chair', and as one moves from most to least typical, the proportion of people agreeing that the item is a 'chair' will decrease.

Rosch (1973) asked subjects to rate the typicality of various members of a category on a 1 to 7 scale, where 1 was 'very typical' and 7 was 'very atypical'. She found that her subjects consistently rated some members of a category as more typical than others. For example:

	Average score on 1 to 7 scale	
CATEGORY: BIRD—	Robin 1.1	Chicken 3.8
SPORT—	Football 1.2	Weightlifting 4.7
CRIME—	Murder 1.0	Vagrancy 5.3
VEGETABLE—	Carrot 1.1	Parsley 3.8

In a later experiment, Rosch (1977) asked subjects to make up sentences based round category names. For example, BIRD produced sentences like:

I heard a bird twittering outside my window.

Three birds sat on the branch of a tree.

She then replaced the category names with typical and less typical members of the category, for example:

I heard a robin twittering outside my window.

I heard a chicken twittering outside my window.

Three robins sat on the branch of a tree.

Three chickens sat on the branch of a tree.

She gave these sentences to her subjects and asked them to rate how sensible the sentences were. The sentences that included typical members of the category were rated as more sensible than those with atypical members of the category.

These types of experiments suggest that people store information about different categories of objects in their memories with the most typical members of the category most easily retrievable. If a Schema is activated, they remember the most typical members of the categories it contains first.

3.4.2.3 Event schemas — scripts

Just as common concepts and objects seem to be organised into Schemas in memory, so, it is suggested, are everyday events in daily life such as going to a restaurant, or to the cinema or the market. These usually involve a very predictable sequence of actions called Scripts, which are also believed to be stored together in our memories.

Bower, Black and Turner (1979) tried to test out the reality of the idea of scripts. They asked their 32 American subjects to list the 20 most important events in '*Going to a Restaurant*'. They found that while none of the subjects produced identical lists there was a great deal of overlap between them, as shown below:

Enter

Give reservation name

BE SEATED

Order drinks

LOOK AT MENU

Discuss menu

ORDER MEAL

Talk

Eat salad or soup

EAT FOOD

Order dessert

Eat dessert

PAY BILL

Leave tip

LEAVE

All the events in lower case letters were mentioned by at least 48% of the subjects, and all those in capital letters by at least 73%. This suggests that people may have the sequence of events to be followed in everyday activities, organised into Event Schemas in their LTM.

3.4.2.4 What does the organisation of information in the LTM tell us about the nature of language?

The Knowledge resulting from the processing and production of verbal (and non-verbal) information is stored in the LTM, mostly in the form of meanings. It is not stored randomly. Wherever connections between concepts, objects or events can be made they seem to be made, and connected items seem to be stored together. This helps speed up access to the Knowledge store so that normal comprehension and production of language is possible.

3.4.2.5 What does the organisation of information in the LTM suggest about language learning and teaching?

a) Learners should be aware of the fact that in their L1, both linguistic and non-linguistic knowledge is stored systematically in their LTM. Some of this knowledge can help them understand and produce

the L2.

b) When new L2 knowledge is introduced, it should wherever possible be linked to existing knowledge. Vocabulary items, for instance, should be linked to other items whose meanings one would expect to find organised within the same schema.

3.4.3 Memory for verbal items in the Long-term Memory

However the information in our LTM is organised, some experiences, and some of what is heard and read, are remembered more vividly than others. What then actually determines how well, or for how long, items are retained in the LTM? Research into memory for verbal items suggests that two factors seem important.

a) Depth of processing.

This refers to what Ls (or readers) are expected to do with the language input that they are given. Some experiments will provide examples:

(Bobrow and Bower 1969) Subjects were divided into two groups. Each group was given a list of sentences to read out loud.

e.g. *The cow chased the rubber ball.*

Group A were asked to read the sentence and decide if the word 'ball' was misspelt.

Group B were asked to read and identify the meaning of the word 'ball' in this context.

Sometime later the subjects were told that they had been participating in a memory experiment. They were given the first noun of the sentence, e.g. 'cow' and asked to remember the second. In Group A subjects could recall the second noun in 18% of the possible cases. Subjects in Group

B, who had had to think about the meaning of the word, remembered the second noun in 48% of cases.

In a second experiment by the same people, also in 1969, subjects were asked to memorise simple SVO sentences (for example: *The hunter shot the tiger*). Group A were given the sentences by the researcher. Group B were given the two nouns and asked to link them so that they made sense. Again sometime later they were given the first noun and asked to remember the second. Group A subjects could recall the second noun in 29% of the cases. Group B subjects who had had to process the materials more deeply by thinking about the meaning of the two nouns and the possible relations between them, remembered the second noun 58% of the time.

Hyde and Jenkins (1973) asked their subjects to listen to 24 words at the rate of one every three seconds. Group 1 were asked to listen and identify whether the word contained the letters 'e' or 'g'. Group 2 were asked to listen and rate each word for pleasantness. In each group half the subjects were told that the purpose of the experiment was to remember the words, the others were told nothing. After listening they were asked to recall the words they had heard. The results are below:

	Check letters (Gp 1)	Pleasantness (Gp 2)
Told to remember	43%	69%
Not told to remember	39%	68%

We can see that the intention to remember what has been heard seems to have very little effect. How the materials are processed is much more important.

This suggests that when listening to (or reading) language, the more

closely learners focus on the meaning rather than just the form of the language, the more likely they are to remember what they hear (or read). If teachers ask learners to look at form only, as in Group A and Group 1 above, then once the mental lexicon or structure rules have been consulted, there is no need to carry the comprehension process any further. Those who are asked to check or identify meaning, on the other hand, have to carry the comprehension process out fully, at the first level at least, and thus first level meaning is transferred to LTM, where it is more likely to be retained for later recall.

- b) Degree of personal interest in, or involvement with, the subject matter of the input.

This relates to Ls' (or readers') feelings or lack of them about what they hear (or read). 2 interesting experiments clarify the idea:

Lott and Walsh (1970) gave their subjects a list of names of public figures. Next to each name were 3 meaningless letters.

e.g. REAGAN ZBY THATCHER TLG
 GORBACHEV JQS SADDAM UCM

Subjects were then asked to say whether they liked, disliked or felt neutral about each person. Later they were given the name of a person and asked to recall the letters that went with that person's name. Their memory was best for letters linked to a person they liked. It was worst for letters linked to those about whom they felt neutral.

Kleinsmith and Kaplan (1963) asked subjects to memorise a series of pairs—one word and one number. The words fell into two categories:

those that were 'emotionally loaded'

e.g. *money hatred love slut*

those that were 'emotionally neutral'

e.g. *white pond shoe berry*

The subjects' emotional reactions to each word were measured electronically to identify which were 'loaded' and which 'neutral' for each subject. When given the word and asked to recall the number at various points after the experiment the results were as follows:

- Recall immediately after— memory better for numbers matched with 'neutral' words.
- 20 minutes later— memory equally good for numbers matched with both kinds of words.
- 45 minutes later—memory 3 times as good for numbers matched with 'loaded' words.
- 1 week later— memory for 'loaded' numbers the same as after 45 minutes. All numbers matched with 'neutral' words forgotten.

These experiments suggest that strong personal interest or emotional involvement in a particular topic, is likely to affect how well a person remembers it.

3.4.3.1 What does research into depth of processing and personal involvement with verbal input suggest about language learning and teaching?

a) People remember better when they focus on the meaning not just on the form of the language. When teachers want learners to remember vocabulary or grammatical rules in the L2, they should highlight the meaning they carry. Vocabulary needs to be introduced by the teacher and used by the learners in a variety of contexts. Grammatical structures need to be introduced in the contexts in which they normally occur, not in a series of sentences whose meaning is secondary to the structure practice provided.

b) If people's degree of personal involvement with the input affects

how well they remember it, teachers need to make some effort to discover what it is the learners are likely to be interested and involved in. Clearly in many situations teachers cannot choose their materials, and in such cases teachers should consider whether they can adapt the way they use the materials they have got. In classes such as Extensive Reading, Listening and Composition, where teachers often do have more freedom to choose their own materials, making some effort to match materials to students' interests and needs is possible.

3.5 Memory and Longer Sequences of Language

So far, it has been assumed that normal language is produced only one sentence at a time. This is of course not so. When people listen to (or read, speak and write) a language, they often have to deal with sequences of sentences or utterances.

When longer streams of language pass through the STM and into LTM, what has been interpreted first, becomes part of the information used to interpret what follows. Understanding of the literal meaning (propositions) expressed in a longer sequence of language, may sometimes involve Ls (or readers) in reassessing their understanding of earlier propositions in the light of information provided by a later proposition. By doing this they can build up an accurate Global Representation of the entire meaning of what has been said (or read). This global representation is based on a literal understanding of all the actual language provided by Ss (or writers) together with all the general knowledge that Ls (or readers) have used to help work out a final meaning.

An example text (adapted from Clark and Clark 1977) is given below. In order to build an accurate 'Global Representation' both L2 knowl-

edge and general knowledge are required:

The couple glanced nervously at each other as they approached the man standing at the front of the room. He talked to them for about ten minutes, loudly enough for everyone in the room to hear, too. He then handed over two objects he had been given, one to each of them. They each placed one on the fourth finger of the other's right hand. After he had said a few more words the ceremony was over. She raised her veil and the two of them kissed, turned round and walked from the room arm in arm, with everyone else falling in behind.

Anyone who is familiar with western culture is likely to recognise that the text is a description of a western wedding, even though this is not explicitly stated. It is only as more and more evidence is provided, that by using their general knowledge, readers can reinterpret what has been read earlier to make it consistent with the final global meaning. It then becomes possible to infer that the Man is probably a priest or civil official responsible for marrying people, that the couple are a man and a woman and that the objects handed over were two rings. Later, if asked to remember what they have actually read, readers are likely to confuse what was actually in the text, with the global representation that they have built up. What stays in their LTM is the Meaning that they have constructed, not the actual words heard or read.

Kintsch (1973/76) looked at what subjects actually remembered of what they had read. He wanted to test out the idea that longer paragraphs contained hierarchies of propositions. By this he means that in certain paragraphs, one or more propositions are particularly central to the overall meaning while others are more peripheral and so less important. He wanted to see whether what people actually remembered varied according to how many propositions the paragraphs contained, and the 'posi-

tion' of each proposition in the hierarchy. Subjects were given paragraphs containing from two to twenty-two propositions and from seven to fifty-eight words in length. They were asked to read them silently and press a button when they had finished. They were then asked to remember as much as they could of what they had read. He looked at what people remembered from texts such as:

Romulus, the legendary founder of Rome took the women of the Sabines by force.

(i) The main proposition (the main meaning) = *Romulus took the women by force.*

(ii) - (iv) Subordinate propositions [that add details to (i)]. All equal in hierarchy.

(ii) *Romulus founded Rome.*

(iii) *Romulus was legendary.*

(iv) *The women were Sabines.*

He found that in this example and in the others used in his experiment, what was recalled most easily after reading was the 'Central' or Main Proposition, the main meaning expressed. He suggests, therefore, that the global representation of longer sequences of text is organised in a hierarchy in the memory with the central proposition(s) higher up the hierarchy than the more peripheral ones. The higher up the hierarchy a particular proposition is, the more easily it will be accurately remembered. The more peripheral a detail is, the less likely we are to remember it accurately.

3.5.1 What does the understanding of longer stretches of language suggest about the nature of language?

a) That the verbal information that Ls (and readers) try to under-

stand, cannot in fact be understood without the non-verbal information stored in the LTM. Similarly when Ls become Ss to respond to what someone else has said, they rely on non-verbal information to help them produce responses that are relevant to what has already been said. In any language use, therefore, the integration of lexical, structural and general knowledge is essential.

b) The verbal information that people remember is stored as meanings. These meanings are the result of people working on the actual words they hear (or read) with the knowledge held in their long-term memory. The eventual global representation that they construct, represents what they think what they have heard (or read) means. If asked to remember it later they may find that, both in meaning and in form, their account does not exactly match what they really heard (or read).

c) What people remember best is the main meaning of what they hear (or read). They do not usually remember the details unless they consciously spend time memorising them.

3.5.2 What does the understanding of longer stretches of language suggest about language learning and teaching?

a) Since non-verbal information in the memory is so important for all aspects of language use, it is important that learners are given as much context as possible for any language learning activity they are asked to take part in. In this way they will be able to activate as much of their non-linguistic knowledge as possible, to help them in their interpretation and/or production of verbal information. They will also be made aware of how much helpful information, about the world and how it works,

they already have. Some ways that context can be provided are:

- i) by spending a little time before each language activity, discussing what topic(s) are likely to arise and what learners already know about them.
- ii) by considering the situation in which the language is being used and what one would normally expect to find in such a situation—what sorts of people, talking about what sorts of things in what sorts of ways. Learners should be encouraged to use their knowledge of their own culture to prepare them for L2 input.

b) What is retained briefly in the STM and more or less permanently in the LTM is meaning. Language is, therefore, used to express meaning, always for some purpose. Learners need to be given clear purposes for any listening (or reading) activity that they are asked to take part in. They must know before they start what it is they are listening (or reading) for.

c) If the meanings that people retain the best are the main meanings of what they hear (or read), it suggests that what they naturally try to do when they try to understand spoken (or written) language is to fit all the individual propositions (literal meanings) expressed, together, to build up a 'whole' global meaning. It seems sensible when listening (or reading) in the language classroom, that learners should be encouraged in the first instance to do the same, to look for the meaning(s) expressed by the whole. Detail, attaching to the main meaning(s) can then be searched for later if it is interesting or relevant.

SUMMARY

In this chapter we have said:

1. That the amount and type of information that people have in their LTM will vary according to their experience of life. Both the linguistic and the non-linguistic knowledge in the LTM are essential for the comprehension and production of any language.

2. That the STM has very limited capacity. This capacity is the greatest for sequences of meaningful language. The LTM appears to have unlimited capacity. Information in the LTM is divided between Episodic Information about actual chronological facts and General Knowledge about the world acquired through experience of living. Linguistic information relating to the L1 and any L2 is part of an individual's General Knowledge.

3. In order to be usable, information in the LTM must be organised in some way. It is suggested that knowledge about common objects and concepts in the world (e.g. HOUSE / EDUCATION) is organised into Schema. Items within schema (e.g. FURNITURE) seem to be organised into Natural Categories. Within each category different examples of an item may be viewed as more or less typical of the category as a whole. Knowledge of everyday sequences of events (e.g. GOING TO THE MARKET, GOING TO THE CINEMA) seem to be organised into event schemas called Scripts. The knowledge associated with any Schema, Natural Category or Script is likely to vary between members of different cultures.

4. How well verbal information is remembered seems to be affected by two factors:

- a) Whether the language input has been processed for meaning.
- b) Whether the Ls (or readers) are involved or interested in the subject matter of the language input.

Any listening (or reading) tasks that learners are asked to perform

should involve seeking out meaning and should be based, wherever possible, around topics that are likely to involve and interest the learners.

5. It is usual to listen to (or read) texts that consist of a number of sentences. Such longer sequences of language are processed in the STM in the order in which they are spoken (or written). Propositions nearer the beginning of such sequences will thus be processed first and their literal meaning will be passed to the LTM. There they will form part of the knowledge available to process propositions that come later. Sometimes what is heard (or read) later appears inconsistent with what has been previously understood. In such cases Ls (or readers) have to adjust their understanding of what they heard (or read) earlier, to take account of the meanings being expressed later. In most longer sequences of language it seems that one or more proposition(s) are more central to the overall meaning of what has been said (or written) than the others. Propositions that express the main meaning of what has been said (or written) are remembered most easily. This suggests that often, when setting listening or reading tasks, teachers should first ask learners to identify the main meaning. Having understood the main meaning, learners can then be asked to find more detailed information.

FURTHER READING

- J. R. Anderson: *Cognitive Psychology and Its Implications*. Freeman 3rd edition. 1990. Chapters 6 & 7.
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- D. J. Foss and D. T. Hakes: *Psycholinguistics*. Prentice Hall. 1978. Chapter 5.

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- A. Garnham: *Psycholinguistics—Central Topics*. Routledge. 1985. Chapter 7.
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4

THE COMPREHENSION OF WRITTEN LANGUAGE

BEFORE YOU READ THIS CHAPTER, TRY AND ANSWER THE QUESTIONS BELOW.

1. What makes a written text more or less difficult to read? What does your answer imply for the choice of L2 reading materials?
2. What is meant by 'Redundancy' in language? How can redundancy help a reader understand a written text?
3. What determines how people read different types of written text (e.g. newspaper, timetable, textbook, novel)? What does your answer suggest about the teaching of L2 reading?
4. It is possible to read and understand the individual words in a text but not understand the meaning of the text as a whole. Why is this so and what does this suggest about the teaching of L2 reading?
5. What do readers mean when they say that they 'understand' the mean-

ing of a written text?

6. Why can making predictions about the content of a text help readers read more efficiently?
-

In the last two chapters we have looked at what is known about comprehension of, and memory for, spoken language. As we saw, much of what applies to spoken language is also relevant to written text. The same will be true in this chapter. Much of the information in our long-term memory that helps us to understand what we hear, also assists us in the interpretation of what we read.

4.1 What Is Reading?

Reading is a psycholinguistic process. Readers (Rs) start with a set of linguistic symbols that have been chosen by writers (Ws) to represent the thoughts that they wish to express. The reading process ends when the Rs have interpreted as much of the Ws' intended meaning as is relevant to them. So the Ws put their meanings into language and the Rs reconvert the language into meanings.

4.2 What Information Is Available to Help Readers Understand What They Read?

In order to be able to understand what they read Rs need, according to Smith (1985), to make use of both visual information (VI) and non-visual information (NVI). By VI Smith means the written symbols (words) on the page. For these to be able to reach the brain for processing, it is necessary for two physical conditions to exist. Rs must have

their eyes open, and there must be sufficient light to see the text.

In addition, in order to make sense of the VI, Rs require NVI. This NVI includes knowledge of the structure and vocabulary of the language in which the text is written, knowledge of the topic being written about, and some experience of the world (general knowledge/schema). Such NVI is, as we have seen, stored in the long-term memory.

To read it is, therefore, necessary to have VI, information that is available through the eyes and which is only available when the eyes can see the text, and NVI, which is information, already part of the store in the long-term memory, always available to help us interpret the VI.

In the reading process the amount of NVI that Rs have available, will determine how easily their brains can interpret the VI. For example look at the texts below, and decide which is easiest to understand.

- a) *Many students study English only because they have to! English is part of the school curriculum because a decision has been taken by someone in authority that it should be so.*
- b) *In the first example, a carbon anion is formed that is stabilized by resonance (electrons delocalized over the carbonyl group and the a carbon atom). In the second case, a carbon atom is formed that is stabilized by the electron withdrawing inductive effect of the three chlorines.*
- c) *Cavorting in the vicinity of the residential area populated by those of a piscatorial avocation, the miniscule crustacean was enmeshed in a reticulated object with interstices between the intersections.*

Probably most readers of this book will find the first text easier to understand than the others. This is a result of the balance between VI and

NVI in each text. There is little difference in complexity of structure between the first two texts. What makes the second text harder to read is the number of specialist scientific terms that a non-scientist is unlikely to know. In the third, the combination of complex sentence structure and the use of infrequent vocabulary items make it difficult to interpret what is in fact quite a simple message: (*Swimming along near an area where there were a lot of fishermen, the shrimp was caught in a net*) Most readers of this book, because they are involved in language teaching, are likely to have more NVI (in this case knowledge about the topic) available to them to help interpret the first text than the other two. The more NVI available to the R, the less reliance there is on VI.

The converse also applies. If we consider children learning to read their first language (L1), or absolute beginners trying to read in a second language(L2), in both cases reading is difficult. This is because little NVI is available. L1 children have little experience of the language or of life in their long-term memories and hence little NVI to draw upon. L2 beginners, even if adults, with wide general knowledge and some knowledge of the topic, have insufficient NVI about the structure and vocabulary of the L2, to be able to use their experience of life to help interpret L2 texts. Both groups thus have to rely mainly on the VI, as we had to do in texts (b) and (c) above. This makes reading very slow and inefficient.

4.2.1 The helpful role of redundancy

Rs (just like listeners) are helped to utilise their NVI by a feature of all natural written (and spoken) language, REDUNDANCY. By redundancy is meant that all spoken or written utterances in any language contain more information than is strictly necessary for them to be understood. Redundancy can provide a great deal of extra VI that a skilled

reader can use to activate his NVI and so provide extra information about the meaning of the text.

A skilled reader then actively uses the VI provided by the redundancy in the text to help him understand the text, rather in the same way that a skilled listener uses syntactic and semantic strategies to help him build up the meaning of spoken language. This extra information is available at three levels:

- a) The orthographic level: the letters of the language and the rules about which letters may combine with which to form words.

At this level the R needs to be able to tell as quickly as possible whether a group of letters is a word, and then to identify the word in the Mental Lexicon. Research shows that more letters can be perceived in a given unit of time if they spell a word, than if not.

For example: alligator-rllaagtio. Here we have exactly the same letters, but those that spell a word are more quickly identified than those that do not. Proficient Rs, with a wide vocabulary will use their knowledge of the L2 spelling system to recognise quickly the strings of letters that make up words in a text. They will often find that some letters in words are redundant and that they can recognise words before they see all the letters. They will not find it necess.... to read right to the en... of eve... word.

- b) The syntactic and semantic levels: the grammar rules of the language and the semantic context in which individual words and sentences are placed.

The text below shows clearly how much redundancy is available to help the reader:

Then we *slooshied* the sirens and knew the *millicents* were coming with *pooshkas* pushing out of the police auto-windows at the

ready. That little weepy *devotchka* had told them, there being a box for calling the *rozzes* not too far behind the building.

The words in italics are all words that are not actually English, but could be. They do not defy any of the rules of English spelling. If we look at what information syntactic redundancy can give us about the first two words, we find:

slooshied— preceded by a pronoun 'we' and ending in 'ed'— a verb; in the past tense because of 'ed' ending and past tense form of following verb 'knew'.

millicents— preceded by 'the' and with verb following— a noun; a plural noun because ends in 's' and plural verb form follows. And so on.

At each point there is more than one syntactic clue to help identify the part of speech, the tense if a verb, and the number if a noun, of the unknown item. This is typical of both written and spoken language.

If we look at the semantic information available we see:

slooshied— sirens make noise; having *slooshied* they knew some things were coming. It is likely that *slooshied* means 'heard'.

millicents— people who come when one hears a siren; police, firemen, ambulancemen. The police are mentioned later, no accident or fire mentioned, so some kind of policemen or soldiers.

The above assumes that the word siren is understood, and the Rs are familiar with the contexts in which sirens are used.

So the VI in the text, if combined with all the NVI that people have in their long-term memory, helps narrow down the possibilities of what

an unfamiliar item might mean.

It is estimated that in ordinary English texts on non-specialist topics, one complete word in five can be removed and the text will still be understandable. The Cloze test is based on this idea: that in the L2, skilled Rs, who can use all the clues in a text, will be able to understand the text well enough, to rebuild it correctly.

4.2.2 What does the interaction of VI and NVI and the natural redundancy of language suggest about the nature of language?

a) Written language is given meaning by the Rs' ability to relate the VI (the letters, words and sentences on the page) to the NVI (knowledge of structure, topic, the world in long-term memory). It is, therefore, possible (as was seen with the science text (b) and the fishing text (c), above, and as will be seen again later), to be able to read the words of a text (the VI), but due to lack of NVI be unable to understand what they mean.

b) Writers of any text need to have a clear idea of who the readers of their text are likely to be. This will enable them to judge how much information they need to give explicitly (VI) and how much helpful NVI they can expect their readers to have in their long-term memories.

c) Written and spoken language contain redundancy, that is, they provide more information than is absolutely necessary to be understood. Skilled Rs are able to use this extra information to help them work out the meaning of a text.

d) Reading is not a passive process. Skilled Rs, as they read, always predicts the meaning of what is likely to come next in the text on

the basis of redundancy and context provided by the VI as well as the NVI available to them.

4.2.3 What does the interaction of VI and NVI and the natural redundancy of language suggest about language learning and teaching?

a) NVI is important to readers trying to interpret written texts. Teachers choosing L2 texts for learners need to consider what NVI their learners are likely to have. Absolute beginners and younger learners who, as we have seen, have only limited NVI resources available, should be given reading texts based on familiar everyday concrete topics, or texts set in the L1 context. In this way learners will be likely to be able to utilise the little NVI that they have. This will help them realise, from the very beginning of reading in the L2, that they have NVI which can help them understand what they read. More advanced or older learners are likely to have greater NVI resources in terms of knowledge of the L2 structure and vocabulary and of experience of life. This will help them to deal with a wider variety of written texts on different topics.

b) Even beginner second language learners (in China usually aged about 13–14) are likely to have some NVI that can help them interpret written language. For example, they will have factual information about the world, about science, geography and history. They will have cultural information about how people usually behave in different sorts of L1 situations. The older learners are, the more NVI they are likely to have. One role of the teacher is to demonstrate to learners that such informa-

tion is available to them and can be used to help comprehend written (and spoken) language, even a foreign language.

c) If learners are to be able to use the syntactic and orthographic clues provided by the natural redundancy they must have a thorough knowledge of the most regular rules of spelling, word formation and grammar.

d) Once they have such structural knowledge, learners need to have the reality of redundancy pointed out to them. They need to be helped to realise as soon as possible that if they do not understand a particular word or phrase, it does not mean that they will not be able to understand the text as a whole. One way of highlighting this is by giving t_e_ practice at rebuilding t_x_s which h_v_ had l_t_e_s or words removed, so that they can _____ just how easy it ___ to do.

4.3 How Do People Actually Read? The Role of the Eyes and the Brain

When people read normally in their L1, their eyes look at the text and pick up VI for their brain to process and interpret. But, although the eyes are open all the time, they only pick up usable information for the brain for a part of the time that they are looking at the text. How much information the eyes pick up depends on the type of text they are looking at and at the amount of NVI they have available about the text structure and topic. The more difficult the text is in terms of its structural or conceptual complexity, and the less NVI Rs have available, the less information the eyes will absorb at one sighting.

In chapter 3, it was noted that the amount of information people can

hold in their short-term memory varies according to what they hear (i.e. people can remember less information if they hear unrelated sounds and more when they hear related chunks of meaningful language). The same is true of the eyes. The amount they can absorb varies according to what they are looking at.

Experiments done with a tachistoscope, a machine that flashes letters and words up on a screen for a very short time, show this clearly. The eyes can absorb and remember:

- 4 or 5 random letters of the alphabet e.g. *p b m x h*
- about 12 letters in unrelated words e.g. *bottle grow*
- about 25 letters in meaningfully related words e.g.

The dogs chased the cats away.

The eyes then present the brain with varying amounts of information at each sighting. The brain needs time to work out the meaning of what it has been shown. The time needed to do this depends on how many possible meanings the brain has to consider. So the less that Rs use redundancy and NVI to predict the meaning, the more possibilities the brain will have to consider, and the longer it will take to establish the correct meaning. A very simple example:

If a person is told that the tachistoscope is going to flash up one of the letters of the English alphabet, the brain has 26 possible choices to decide between, when the eye presents it with VI.

If the person is told that either 'A' or 'B' will be flashed up, then the brain only has to choose between the 2 possibilities. It will be able to identify the 'meaning' of the VI more quickly than when it has to consider the 26 choices above.

When skilled Rs read normally in their L1, their eyes are open all the time, but only pick up information for some of that time. This is be-

cause when people read, their eyes do not move smoothly and consistently across the page. They move in a series of jerky movements called *Saccades*. The purpose of a saccade is to move the eye from one pause to another, and during these movements very little is seen. Each pause is called a *Fixation*. During a fixation the eyes take in VI and pass it to the brain for processing. Once the brain is sure of the meaning of the VI from one fixation, another saccade occurs to move the eyes to the next fixation. Normal skilled Rs cannot make more than 4-5 saccades, and so 4-5 fixations, per second.

As well as fixations there may be *Regressions* while reading. These are pauses that occur after a backward saccade. They happen as a result of the eyes having moved too far between fixations and so finding that the VI passed to the brain cannot be understood. In order to pick up the meaning of the text it is necessary to move back in the text to a point where the VI can once again be comprehended. The more difficult the VI in a text is, due to its topic, the clarity with which it is expressed, its sentence structure or its vocabulary, the smaller will be the distance between fixations and the more likely it is that the Rs will need to make regressions in order to understand it.

Since there are physical limits to the number of fixations and regressions possible per second, skilled Rs are those who take in as much VI as possible per pause, and who are able to understand it. Normal Rs read selectively. At each fixation they check the meaning that they understand against what they already know about the text to see if it is still making sense in the context. They then allow their eyes to move as far as possible across or down the page to the next fixation.

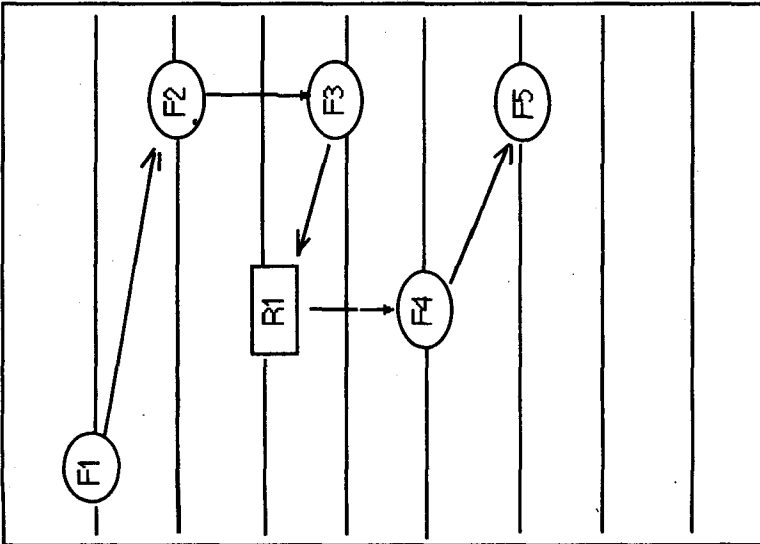


Figure 3: AN 'EASY' READING TEXT

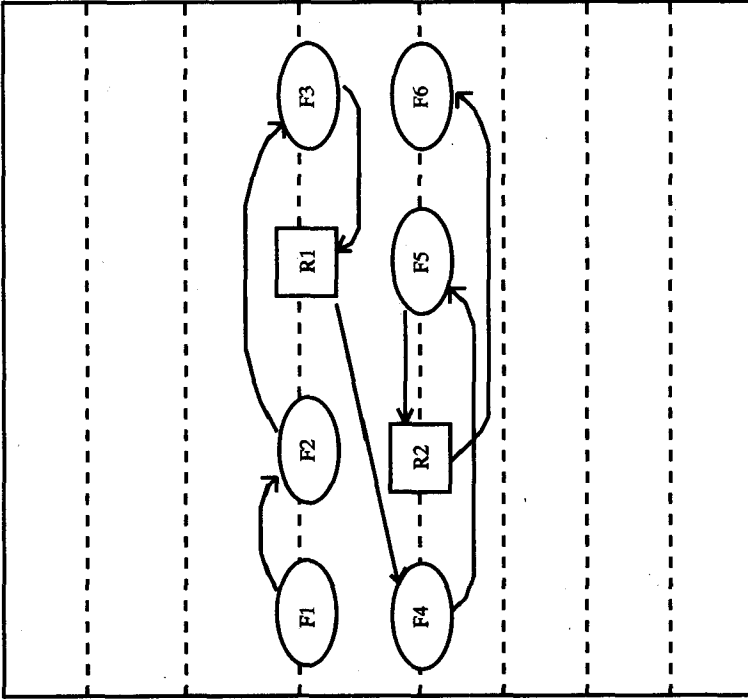


Figure 4: A "DIFFICULT" READING TEXT

In Figure 3 (the 'Easy' text) the reader begins with her first fixation F1. She interprets the meaning and goes to F2. Here she again works out the meaning, finds it is consistent with what she understood at F1 and so moves her eyes to F3. At F3 she is unable to understand. She has gone too far down the page, so her brain tells her eyes to make a backward saccade, a regression, to a spot on the page between F2 and F3 to try and pick up the meaning of the text again. The eyes move to R1. Once the meaning has been re-established, the eyes move on to the next fixation. In Figure 4 where the text is more difficult, the fixations come much closer together; the reader needs to read almost every word to establish the meaning.

Efficient Rs are those who can understand a text while moving as far as possible during each saccade without losing the meaning, and so having to make a regression. Such Rs can accurately judge how much of the text they actually need to read in order to understand what is written.

4.3.1 What does the physical process of reading suggest about the nature of language?

a) As a result of the predictions made by skilled Rs, the brain has only a limited number of choices to make when interpreting the text. It is therefore able to do so more quickly.

b) In any language the extent to which Rs will be able to jump between fixations will depend on the complexity of the text topic and structure, the amount of NVI available and how detailed the understanding of the text needs to be. Rs will need to read different texts in different ways and with differing attention to detail. How they read will be determined by their purpose for reading the text in the first place. A newspaper guide to 'What's On' at the cinema, a Kung Fu novel, an academic article, an

article about a Film Star's love affair, a school textbook, may all be read differently by different people with distinct reasons for reading them. These various types of reading will involve different patterns of Fixations and Regressions.

4.3.2 What does the physical process of reading suggest about language learning and teaching?

a) Teachers should try to train their learners to identify all the available contextual clues provided by the VI and, on the basis of these, to use their NVI to predict what is likely to come next. In doing this, teachers will be training learners to cut down the number of possibilities that the brain has to consider, and so training them to be faster readers. Learners will need plenty of practice at activating their NVI. Teachers thus need to work out classroom techniques to help them do this. Some suggestions are made in two books that are available in Chinese editions. These are:

F.Grellet: *Developing Reading Skills*. Cambridge University Press. 1981.

C. Nuttall: *Teaching Reading Skills in a Foreign Language*. Heinemann Educational Books. 1982.

b) Intensive Reading does not reflect natural reading. Intensive Reading focusses equally on each word in the text, regardless of its role in carrying the overall message of the text. While it may be useful as a way of teaching the rules of grammar, word formation and vocabulary, it cannot be a way of training L2 learners to be effective L2 readers.

c) In Extensive Reading teachers need to train learners to read quickly and selectively, using the clues provided by the various forms of redundancy and by their NVI. To do this when teachers ask learners to

read something they need to give them a purpose for reading. Learners should be given this purpose before they begin to read, so that as they read they are actively looking for something in the text; doing in the L2 what they naturally do in the L1.

4.4 Reading for Form or for Meaning?

It is generally agreed that people read to understand the meaning of the text, but there are three different models proposed about how Rs actually arrive at the meaning. Some people suggest that Rs process the written text 'Bottom Up', others that they do so 'Top Down', and still others that they use 'Parallel' or 'Interactive' processing.

The 'Bottom Up' model proposes that Rs build up the meaning of the text letter by letter, word by word and sentence by sentence. Until one level of processing has finished the next cannot begin. They build up the meaning of the parts of the text and in this way eventually arrive at the meaning of the whole. This view stresses the importance of VI.

Those who support the idea of a 'Top Down' processing model, suggest that Rs first of all use their General Knowledge of the world, the language and the topic to read for the overall meaning, using the context to guess the meaning of any unfamiliar items. Rs only then look at how the meaning is expressed in detail, if that is part of their purpose for reading. Here the role of NVI is thought to be most important.

Those who subscribe to the Parallel Processing or Interactive model, believe that Rs need to use both lower level (letter and word identification) skills and higher level (General and Topic) knowledge to be able to interpret a text. They suggest that Rs use their skills at all levels more or less simultaneously. Having identified the VI they then process and in-

terpret it with the help of the NVI.

"I would suggest... that there is in fact an interaction among the levels. The reader starts with the perception of graphic clues, but as soon as these are recognised as familiar, schemata derived from both linguistic knowledge and knowledge of the world in general are brought into play...." (Parry, 1987)

Nobody is certain exactly what Rs do, but the reading processes that have discussed above and evidence presented below make the Parallel Processing or Interactive model seem the most likely.

It was said earlier that NVI is very important in the reading process because it provides Rs with a means of using the structural and contextual clues provided by the redundancy of natural language. Many of these clues depend not just on a single word, but on the meaning given to each individual word by the other words surrounding it.

That this is so, can be demonstrated by the fact that it is possible to read and understand all the individual words in a sentence without understanding what the sentence means. For example:

Meaning for directly or later meaning and first form for read we whether about argument is there so, one become processes comprehension reading and listening where exactly unsure are people as just.

Most people with a knowledge of English could probably understand the individual words that they have read, but not the meaning of the text as a whole. This is because the meanings of each individual word seem to have no relationship to the surrounding words. If the text is read back to front, it is possible to understand the whole meaning because

each word meaningfully relates to the words surrounding it. This suggests strongly that it is natural to consider the meaning of a text as a whole first, not the meaning of the individual words.

Further evidence against a Bottom Up model comes from an experiment conducted by Kohlers (1966). He took as his subjects a group of bilingual English-French speakers. He asked them to read aloud a meaningful text written in mixed English and French. For example:

Aujourd'hui je am sitting avant mon desk. Dehors the temps est lovely and chaud, mais there is a little vent and les arbres sont moving.

He found that as they read, the subjects substituted English and French words for each other at random and without noticing, but all the time retaining the same overall meaning. Some changed the English parts to French and some vice versa, but whatever they did the meaning remained the same. When asked afterwards to state what they had read out, they understood the meaning exactly, but were unable to say which words had been in French and which in English. This again suggests that they were reading for the meaning of the whole text, not for the meaning of individual words.

The Top Down model therefore looks more convincing than the Bottom Up. However, in order to be able to reach the stage of actually processing the text from the Top Down using NVI in the long-term memory, it is necessary initially to identify the letters in the text and the words they represent. A good reader then is one who first of all quickly and accurately processes the VI on the page and then uses all his NVI resources to interpret them.

"...It has been found over and over again that the best discriminator between good and poor readers is performance on simple word and letter identification tasks.." (Van Dijk and Kintsch, 1983:23-24)

If this is so, it seems likely that some kind of Parallel Processing or Interactive model is the most accurate.

4.4.1 What do models of the reading process suggest about the nature of language?

The main function of language forms or structures is to express Ws' (or speakers') intended meaning. Only when Rs understand the forms in their context can they understand what they mean. Understanding individual lexical items in incorrectly constructed strings, is no guarantee that Rs can understand their overall meaning. The syntactic word order rules within sentences, and the discourse rules about the organisation of sentences in text are crucial for the construction (and comprehension) of meaningful text.

4.4.2 What do models of the reading process suggest about language learning and teaching?

a) The rules for combining words into correct sentences and sentences into longer stretches of discourse play a vital role in enabling Ws (or speakers) to express and Rs (or listeners) to understand intended meaning. Learners need to know something about the usual Form: Function relationships between the components of common sentence patterns and types of discourse organisation; for example the different meaning relationship between Subject and Adverbial or Complement in SVA and SVC sentence patterns. They need to know something about discourse organisation, such as the common chronological organisation of narrative or process discourse and the subsequent importance of the dynamic (action propelling) verbs within such text. Merely teaching the grammar

rules is not enough. Teachers need also to try and highlight the meaning carried by the rules, by demonstrating their use in common contexts where they are often likely to occur.

b) Although it is necessary to be able to identify letters and words quickly and correctly, learners also need to be taught that wherever possible they should 'jump' from lower to higher level processes. Once words have been identified learners should then use all the NVI that they have available to help understand the overall meaning of the text. They need not proceed word by word when looking for meaning.

Learners, therefore, need training both in Bottom Up word identification skills and in Top Down processing skills that emphasise reaching understanding of the overall meaning.

4.5 What Do Readers Mean by Saying They 'Understand the Meaning' of a Text?

People never read with a blank mind. They read for a purpose, to find something out. Whether explicitly or implicitly they always read with questions in mind. Understanding what has been read involves finding the answers to those questions. The questions may be of many kinds, for example:

I wonder what is on television tonight.

Who scored the goals in the football match yesterday?

What will happen next in this story?

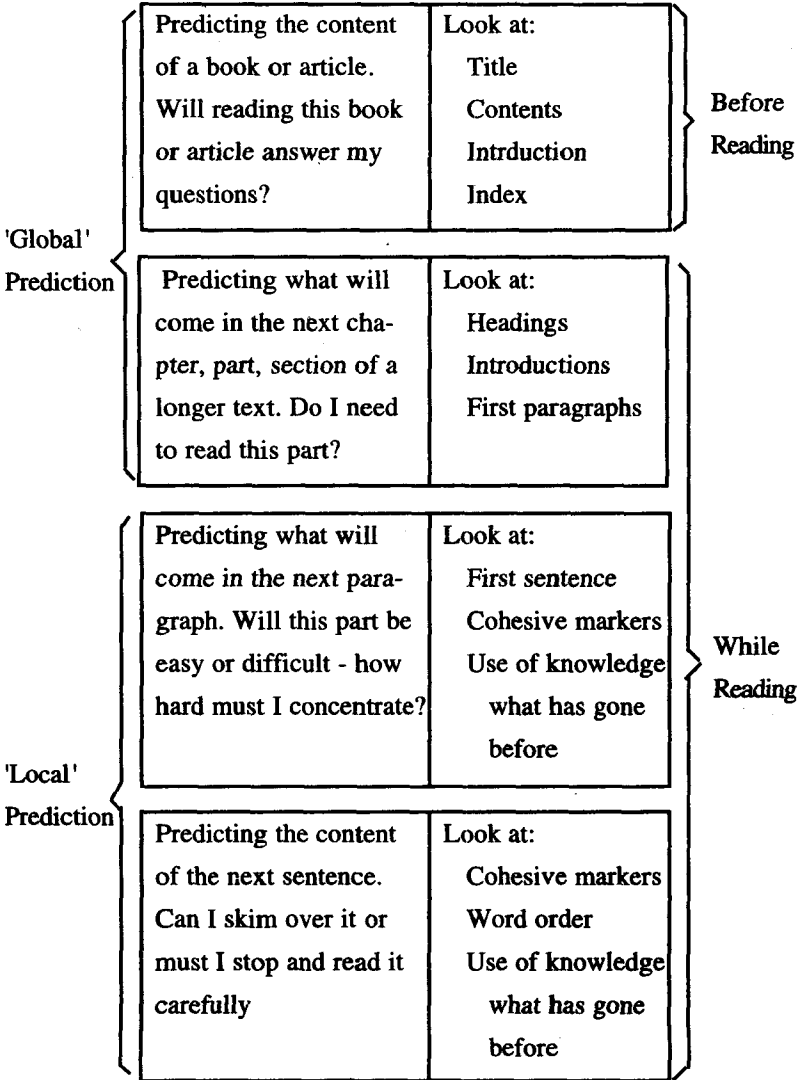
What does Communicative Competence mean?

When readers read, they look for meanings in the text that will answer the questions that have made them decide to read in the first place.

As seen above, normal readers do not usually read every word of a

Figure 5

PREDICTION AS PART OF READING COMPREHENSION



text and their own NVI to predict where in a text they are likely to find the answers they want. These predictions, which they make naturally when reading their L1, are made at every level of the text.

At the global level readers may look at a book, a newspaper or an article and predict from the title, the headlines, the introduction, or the list of contents whether it is likely to contain information that will answer their questions. Within the book they may look at the titles of the chapters and the subheadings to decide where the answers are most likely to be found. At the more local level of prediction they look at paragraphs and sentences in the light of what has come before them, and of the cohesive markers they contain, (e.g. secondly—as a result—in contrast), to judge whether they are likely to help answer their questions.

This prediction is not necessarily always conscious. In fact in L1 reading it usually happens automatically. However, efficient Rs constantly use NVI to predict what is coming next, on the basis of what is already known. In this way the brain, when processing new VI, has fewer possible meanings to consider and thus is able to reach understanding of meaning more quickly and efficiently.

4.5.1 What does the role of prediction in efficient reading suggest about the nature of language?

a) All Ws (like all speakers) use language for a purpose. They want to convey information or ideas to Rs. Rs (like listeners) use the linguistic and non-linguistic knowledge that they have, (their NVI), to interpret both the forms of the language and the meaning that the Ws intend the forms to convey.

b) Rs always have a purpose for reading. This purpose can be a very explicit question that they want to answer by reading a particular text. The purpose may also be much less defined, for example to be entertained or amused. Rs always have some expectations about what they will find in a text. They use these expectations (based on predictions made using the NVI stored in the long-term memory) to decide whether a particular text is likely to answer their questions, and whether they need to read it all, or just part, carefully or casually.

4.5.2 What does the role of prediction in efficient reading suggest about language learning and teaching?

a) If prediction is so important in the reading process, L2 learners need:

- i) to realise that they DO predict in their L1 reading, and CAN predict in the L2 also.
- ii) to be given prediction tasks both before and within the text, to practise and develop their prediction skills. Some possible ways of doing this are:
 - Prediction before reading on the basis of Titles and Topics.
 - Giving learners the first sentence of a text and asking them to predict what will come next.
 - Giving learners the first and last sentences of a paragraph and asking them to predict what was in between.
 - Giving learners a number of jumbled sentences from a paragraph or paragraphs from a text and asking them to put them in their original order.
 - Giving learners the paragraphs of two texts mixed up to-

gether and asking them to separate them.

— Giving learners cloze type texts.

In all of these tasks learners should be asked to explain HOW they have reached their conclusions and what parts of their NVI were most helpful to them in coming to a final decision. By doing this, they will in time develop the habit of automatically using their NVI to help predict when reading in the L2, just as they already do in the L1.

b) We have seen that efficient readers formulate questions, (mentally at least), the answers to which provide the purpose for reading. Different kinds of questions (reading purposes) will require different kinds of reading style. For example:

- i) If the question to be answered is very specific—*when did they get married?*—then to answer it the R will only need to read the part of the text that deals with the answer.
- ii) If the question is much more global—*what is the author's attitude to the hero?*—it may be necessary to read the whole text to build up a complete picture of the attitude.

Efficient Rs automatically vary their reading style according to the questions that they want to answer. In order for learners to do in the L2 what they do automatically in their L1, they need to be given a wide range of different types of reading texts and a variety of different types of questions to answer. In this way they will become practised at varying their reading styles according to the sort of answers that they are looking for.

c) Traditional reading comprehension texts with their list of questions after the text, provide no purpose for reading, no questions to be answered while reading. They are not, therefore, a natural way of judging whether learners are efficient Rs able to read differently according to their reading purpose.

d) If teachers really want learners to be efficient readers of English in the Chinese context, they need to consider:

- i) For what purposes are the learners likely to need to read English in the future? — pleasure? education? business?
- ii) What types of text are they likely to need to read, to achieve those purposes?—novels? newspapers? academic articles and books? business letters?
- iii) How can learners be trained to read relevant texts for relevant purposes as efficiently as possible? What sort of reading skills ought to be emphasised? What relationships between reading purposes, speed of reading and depth of comprehension should be established for learners? Do they need to be able to do all of the following equally well ?

SCANNING reading very quickly: to understand certain specific pieces of information in the text. It is not necessary to read the whole text to find the essential information.
e.g. *What's on TV at 9pm tonight?*

SKIMMING reading quickly: to identify what type of text it is and obtain a general idea of what it is about — The whole text must be read, but not in any detail.
e.g. *What is the process described in the text and how many stages does it consist of?*

READING FOR GLOBAL UNDERSTANDING / EXTENSIVE

READING reading less quickly: to identify the main themes and ideas, the writer's attitude, the logical organisation with examples of the writer's arguments and opinions

and to be able to give a brief resume of the content.

e.g. *What is the topic discussed in the text?*

What is the writer's attitude to the topic?

How can you tell what her attitude is?

What arguments does she use to support her point of view?

READING FOR CRITICAL ANALYSIS/INTENSIVE READING

reading many parts of the text slowly and carefully: to understand the text fully, to be able to distinguish facts and opinions, to be able to comment on the style in which it's written, to be able to write a comprehensive summary or literary criticism of the text.

SUMMARY

In this chapter we have said:

1. Rs make use of VI and NVI when they try to understand the meaning of a text. The more NVI Rs have, (for example, the more proficient they are in the language that the text is written in and the more they know about the topic of the text), the easier it will be for them to understand.

The NVI available to most L2 beginners is likely to be general knowledge about the world and about the L1 culture. Suitable texts for such learners are ones that are set in the L1 culture, or that deal with common everyday occurrences.

2. Redundancy refers to the fact that all natural spoken and written

language contains more linguistic and non-linguistic information than is strictly necessary for it to be understood. Redundancy can help readers by providing extra orthographic, syntactic and semantic information which can, (in the same way as syntactic and semantic clues help listeners), be used to interpret unfamiliar parts of the text.

3. In their L1 people read different types of written texts in different ways. How a text is read depends on why it is being read. Efficient readers vary their reading style to match their reading purpose. L2 learners need to be given the opportunity to develop a range of reading styles. Teachers should thus try and provide a variety of different types of reading texts which the learners may realistically be asked to read in different ways for different purposes.

4. It is perfectly possible to understand the individual words in a text without understanding the meaning of the text as a whole. This demonstrates that part of the meaning of any individual lexical item depends on items that surround it in the text. Efficient readers do not build up meaning word by word. Once they have identified VI (letters and words), they immediately try to interpret the VI in the context of what has gone before and what they expect to follow.

5. People read texts for a purpose. The purpose is to find answers to consciously or unconsciously formed questions. When readers say that they 'understand' a text, they mean that they have successfully answered the questions that prompted them to read that text in the first place.

6. Prediction can help people read more efficiently. Before beginning to read a text prediction on the basis of the title, the contents, the introduction can help Rs decide whether a particular text is likely to answer the questions that they want answered. If they decide that the text is suitable, such pre-reading prediction can help to activate their knowl-

edge, if any, of the text content (part of their NVI). While reading, accurate prediction on the basis of the context and of what has already been read, can maximise the distance the eyes move between fixations and can also narrow down the number of interpretations that the brain has to choose from at each fixation. This leads to faster reading.

FURTHER READING

- F. Smith: *Reading*. Cambridge University Press (CUP), 2nd edition. 1985. Chapters 1-3.
- P. Carrell (ed): *Interactive Approaches to Second Language Reading*. Cambridge University Press (CUP). 1988.
- D. J. Foss and D.T. Hakes: *Psycholinguistics*. Prentice Hall. 1978. Chapter 11.
- S. McDonough. *Psychology in Foreign Language Teaching*. Allen and Unwin, 2nd edition. 1986. Chapter 4.
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- C. Nuttall: *Teaching Reading Skills in a Foreign Language*. Heinemann. 1982. Chapter 1.
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5

THE PRODUCTION OF SPOKEN LANGUAGE

BEFORE YOU READ THIS CHAPTER, TRY AND ANSWER THE QUESTIONS BELOW.

1. Why do people speak to each other?
2. What do speakers need to plan before they actually say anything?
3. What evidence is there that language has structure above sentence level?
4. Are 'errors' normal in spoken language?
5. What factors may affect how fluently a person speaks?

In Psycholinguistics the comprehension processes have been studied far more often than the production processes. The main reason for this is that when researchers study comprehension they can control the data

(the language) that the subjects are asked to remember or understand. If they can control the data, it is possible for them to test hypotheses about the comprehension processes. When dealing with the production of language, it is important to look at natural, not artificial, language use. As a result, the data that researchers receive consists of whatever the subjects happen to say. Although the situation in which people speak can be controlled, what they say cannot, and so it is difficult to develop and test ideas about how language is produced.

5.1 What Is Speaking?

People speak to have some kind of effect on listeners (Ls). They speak for a purpose. They use the language to do things. They perform functions, using the language in order to achieve particular purposes, to have specific effects on the listeners.

For example:

FUNCTION/WHAT SPEAKERS DO	POSSIBLE PURPOSE FOR SPEAKING/ POSSIBLE EFFECT ON LISTENERS
they make statements	to give Ls information that they do not know
they make requests	to ask Ls to do or to stop doing something
they promise	to do something for Ls or a third party
they warn	Ls to do or not to do something
they apologise	to let Ls know they are sorry
they chat	to build up and maintain good relationships with Ls

Many functions can vary in their purpose according to the context in which they are being performed, so the purposes given above are only one of several possibilities. Whatever people's purposes for speaking may be, they have to go through two processes before they can communicate it to listeners (Ls). First they have to plan what they want to say. Then they have to make sure that they actually utter it in such a way that Ls understand their purpose for saying it.

5.1.1 What do people's reasons for speaking suggest us about the nature of language?

- a) That people always speak for a purpose.
- b) That people usually speak about matters that are NOT already known to all parties involved. Speaking involves the giving or receiving of new information.

5.1.2 What do people's reasons for speaking suggest about language learning and teaching?

If teachers want learners to practise using language to communicate freely, when they design oral activities they need to bear a number of things in mind. The learners must be provided with a purpose for speaking to each other. This purpose will often involve the giving or finding out of information or opinions that are not already known to the speaker or listener. There will be an information gap between them and the activity will involve using the second language (L2) to 'bridge' this gap. Oral activities should also be designed with a clear goal or end point, so that learners can see whether they have successfully communicated or not.

5.2 Speech Planning

In order for speakers (Ss) to achieve their purpose, they must mentally decide what they are going to say, and then actually say it.

This division between the Planning stage and Acting on the Plan, is not an exact one. At any given moment Ss are likely to be both planning and uttering. If this were not so and Ss could only plan a single sentence, then utter it, then plan the next sentence, then utter it, and so on, natural speech would be very slow and halting. Natural speech is not like that. People usually speak quickly and often produce utterances in quick succession, without a long gap between the first, second, and subsequent sentences. It seems more likely then, that as Ss actually utter what is already planned, they simultaneously plan what they are going to say next. This allows normal speech to flow fluently.

Clark and Clark (1977) suggest that there are 5 stages to the planning process.

a) *The Discourse Plan*: At this first stage of planning Ss need to identify what type of discourse they are taking part in, so that they can plan appropriately. By 'Discourse' is meant the kind of speaking Ss are planning to be engaged in. Are they, for example, having a conversation, telling a story, giving instructions, describing a person, giving a lecture or a formal speech, or telling a joke? Each separate type of discourse may have its own organisational features that need to be followed when planning what to say (see 5.3 for more details). The same kind of Discourse may be structured differently in different languages. Ss have to be aware of the organisational rules of the discourse they are planning to take part in, for whatever language they are planning to use.

b) *The Sentence Plan*: Once Ss have identified the type of discourse

they are going to participate in, they need to plan sentences that will express what they want to say. For each sentence they need to decide, for example:

- i) Who or what will be the subject of the sentence?
- ii) How much of what they will say will be new information for the Ls, and what can they expect the Ls to know already?

On the basis of this Ss will decide how explicit they will need to be. Can they use 'he', 'she', 'there', 'that' or must they name everything?

- iii) Do they want to express their intention directly or indirectly?

c) *The Constituent Plan*: Having decided on the form the sentence should take to convey their intentions, the Ss must now fill in the slots in each constituent (S-V-O, etc.) of the sentence. Here then Ss must decide which exact words or phrases in what order in the sentence will best express exactly what they want to say. Do they want to say 'the boy climbed the tree' or 'the tree was climbed by the boy'? It will depend on what Ss want to emphasise, on what effect they want to have on the Ls.

d) *The Articulatory Programme*: As Ss choose specific words to fill the slots in each constituent, the words are passed to the short-term memory for storage. Here they are represented as a series of phonetic symbols, with stress and intonation patterns marked, ready for the final stage of the plan.

e) *Articulation*: Ss are now ready to speak. The brain sends messages to the articulatory muscles of the mouth and throat to actually utter the sounds represented in the short-term memory. The plan is put into operation. The intended meaning is uttered.

Figure 6 shows the stages of the planning process. It can be seen that most stages take place in and use information from the LTM. As with the stages of comprehending spoken language, the various parts of

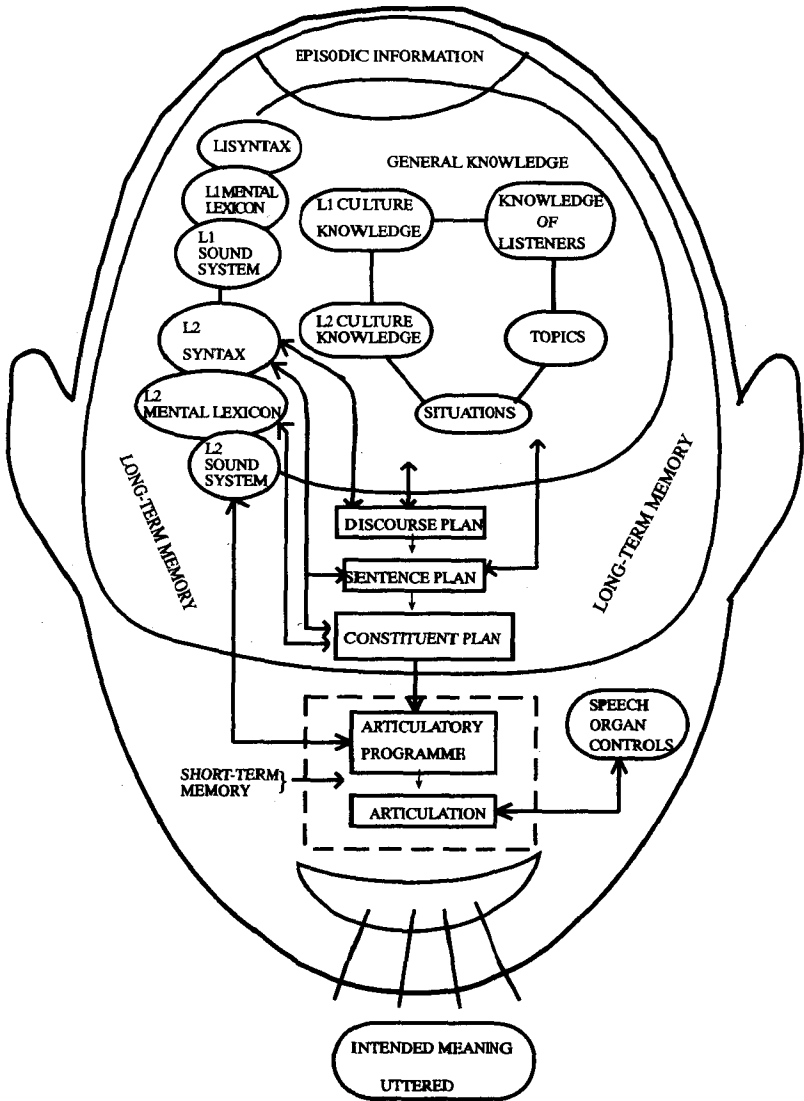


Figure 6 SPEECH PRODUCTION IN A SECOND LANGUAGE

the speech plan are not really totally independent of one another. They are more a continuous overlapping set of processes. The stages of speech planning on the diagram, for Ss using their L2, are considered below.

Ss have an intention to speak, something they want to convey to Ls. At the Discourse Plan level they need information about the appropriate way to structure the type of discourse that they are planning to take part in. What is appropriate may vary from one language to another. Here then Ss have to refer to information stored in their long-term memory. They need to search for non-linguistic information about the situation, the Ls, the topic and linguistic information about L2 discourse organisation. Combined, this information will help them to decide what is appropriate for the situation in which they are planning to speak.

At the Sentence Plan level, Ss will again need both linguistic and non-linguistic information from the long-term memory. They will need information about the Ls, to decide how much the Ls already know about what they are planning to say, and so how explicit they must be. If Ss want to express their intention indirectly, they will need to know the L2 rules for doing so. Ss will need to know the L2 sentence structure and word order rules and may also need to refer to the mental lexicon.

To carry out the Constituent Plan, Ss will need information about sentence structure and the effects on meaning of changing the word order. They will need to refer to the mental lexicon and consider which words will most exactly express their intention.

To complete the Articulatory Programme Ss will need to refer to their knowledge of the sound system of the language. Exactly where this sort of information is stored is not clear. Some may be stored together with the other information about words in the Mental lexicon, or there may be a separate store of phonetic information that also contains details

of the prosodic features of the language, such as the rules of stress and intonation.

Finally in order to articulate, Ss will have to call on that part of the brain that controls the speech organs: the larynx, the vocal chords, the tongue and the lips.

In a conversation, Ss, as they speak, continually monitor the Ls and may sometimes need to adapt the speech plan in response to the Ls' reactions. For example, if the Ls are looking bored, the Ss may decide to omit certain parts of what they had planned to say, or if the Ls are looking confused, the Ss may need to check whether the Ls are following what is being said, or to repeat what has been said previously.

It can be seen, that in order to plan effectively, it is again necessary to have both linguistic and non-linguistic information available.

We will now look in greater detail at the two main stages of the planning process, the Discourse and Sentence Plans, because it is here that the major decisions are made about how Ss' intentions will be expressed.

5.3 The Discourse Plan

As noted above, every sentence uttered is designed to fit into the type of Discourse that Ss are taking part in— conversation, story, lecture and so on. Superficially these may not appear to have any real structure, but recent research in Discourse Analysis, Text Analysis and Conversational Analysis has shown that to differing extents they do. This has led to the idea that just as there are sentence grammars that identify which strings of words are correct sentences in a language, so it may be pos-

sible to develop Discourse or Text Grammars, that can describe what organisational features above the sentence level determine whether or not a text is well formed.

When considering discourse structure the first crude division to be made is that between dialogue and monologue. In a dialogue two or more people have to coordinate their talk, and take notice of what previous speakers have said when planning their own contribution. The extent to which it is possible to plan what to say in advance is therefore limited. In a monologue in which a single S is involved, it would seem easier to plan what to say in advance, since the chance of having to make major changes in what has been planned, as a result of other people's contributions, is far smaller.

a) We begin by considering dialogues. The most common form of dialogue is conversation which, superficially, may seem to have little or no structure. Studies, mostly of English, by Conversational Analysts have begun to show that this is not so. Conversation in English has certain definite characteristics. It usually consists of a series of fairly short verbal exchanges, with rapid changes of topic generally dealing with the participants' immediate experiences or surroundings, and a lot of use of informal language and routine formulas. Within a conversation there are very definite rules about Turn Taking, for example, who is entitled to choose the next speaker, how long people feel comfortable with silences, who is entitled to interrupt who. There are 'Openings' to conversations—ways of attracting people's attention (e.g. *'Lovely day, isn't it?'*) and ways of showing that one wants the conversation to continue (e.g. *'Do you live round here?'*). Similarly conversations have 'Closings'—points at which Ss make it clear that the conversation could end (e.g. *'Not much we can*

do about it really.'), or where Ss show that they definitely want the conversation to end (e.g. *'Sorry, I must rush, see you next week.'*). If these rules of turn taking, and of beginning and ending conversations are not observed by one participant in a conversation, this is noticed by the other(s). So far the structure of conversation has only begun to be described. It is now, though, generally agreed that conversation in any language is not a random exchange of speech between the participants. Conversation follows rules. The rules may differ according to the cultural background of the language being spoken, but rules for turn taking, knowing how much to say, how to start and end conversations smoothly, must exist in all languages. If they did not, it would be impossible to account for the fact that, usually, conversations proceed so successfully even among people who have just met each other. As a result of these rules (that exist whether we can consciously describe them or not), it is possible, to varying extents, even within a conversation to plan what to say.

b) If we now consider monologues, there would seem to be greater scope for forward planning, since the Ss do not usually have to take other people's contributions into account. But to what extent do different types of monologue have specific ways of organisation and so to what extent is it realistic to talk of discourse plans? Again most of the work in this field has been done by looking at English. We shall discuss the following 4 types of discourse.

i) Stories:

Most of the ideas about the construction of text grammars have been based on looking at the structure of stories. Stories usually have an important narrative element; a sequence of events and a sequence in

which characters appear and disappear. Rummelhart (1975) has looked at stories, and tried to represent the rules of text grammar via tree diagrams, in the same way that traditional descriptive grammarians have tried to represent sentences. He sees stories as having a structure made up of:

A **SETTING** + 1 (or more) **EPISODE(S)**

THE SETTING sets the scene — gives the time, place and main characters of the story.

EACH EPISODE contains 1 (or more) **EVENT(S)** — a series of connected actions plus **REACTIONS** — internal or external responses to **EVENTS**.

For example: (**SETTING**) *Once upon a time in Yunnan lived a peace-loving king with a very beautiful daughter.* (**EPISODE**) (**EVENT**) *One day a messenger arrived in the kingdom with the news that a huge army was approaching, laying waste to the country, and led by a giant dressed totally in black.* (**REACTION—internal response**) *The king was worried about what would happen to his daughter, and* (**REACTION—external response**) *sent her to hide in a cave deep in the hills.*

As a general outline of how stories are structured, Rummelhart's framework does work for a wide range of different story types in English. If this structure is not followed, in English, it is noticed by the listener. The story somehow sounds wrong. If this is so for English it is likely that other languages too have a more or less similar structure for the telling of stories.

ii) Narrative accounts, processes, giving directions or instructions:

Here again sequence is important. Usually a strict chronological se-

quence according to the order of events. So if Ss are telling Ls how to do something, they must be careful that they get the actions and the items needed to perform each action in the correct sequence. If Ss are telling Ls the way somewhere, again what actions to take when, and what to look out for where, need careful sequencing. Describing processes similarly, the sequence of events and the part played by each stage of the process also need to be dealt with in the order they occur. Discourse types such as these, in very many languages, are likely to follow much the same pattern of discourse organisation.

iii) Stating opinions, conclusions or recommendations in Lectures or Presentations:

In English speaking countries lectures or presentations tend to follow a fairly predictable pattern. They start with an optional summary of what has gone before or what has led to Ss and Ls being present. Next, comes an introduction to set the scene for what is to be discussed and why. This is followed by the main body of the lecture/presentation in which the topic(s) or situation(s) is/are discussed, with examples or demonstrations given as appropriate. On the basis of the discussion, conclusions are drawn or recommendations made. The Ss may then end with a summary of what has been said and of the conclusions reached.

Brick (1991:106–107) noted that Chinese and Australians differ in their perceptions of what constitutes an appropriate way to express opinions or make recommendations in an academic and a business context. She found that both sides noticed, and were perplexed by, the other side's behaviour. This suggests that certainly Chinese and English do have their discourse structures rules, and when they are not followed it is noticed.

iv) Descriptions of people, places, objects:

These, like conversations, do seem unstructured. Ss can decide what

to include in a description, what to ignore and what order to present the information in. An interesting experiment here suggests that for some types of description anyway, people follow very similar plans. Linde and Labov(1975) asked 100 New Yorkers, all of whom lived in apartments the question, '*Could you tell me the layout of your apartment?*' In order to give such a description, these people had to plan what they would say from at least three different angles. Firstly, in what order would they mention the rooms, next how much emphasis would they give to each individual room and finally how would they relate one room to another within the description. These three variables would seem to give a lot of scope for individual differences. When giving their descriptions, however, 97 out of the 100 subjects chose exactly the same method of structuring what they said. They gave their description in the form of a tour of the flat, starting and finishing at the front door, emphasising the major rooms (sitting room, dining room, kitchen, etc.) and playing down the minor rooms (bathroom, lavatory). This suggests that perhaps in descriptive language too there are conventional discourse patterns which, most people follow.

Different types of discourse are structured to differing degrees of exactness. Obviously the more closely a particular type of discourse is structured, the less planning at any level is actually necessary and Ss can move more or less straight to the articulatory programme. So, casual conversation, while structured to some extent, still requires planning at every level. More ritualised events, like a western wedding ceremony on the other hand, are completely structured. Who says what, when, is laid down in advance, and the participants just need to read or learn their lines. Here there is no scope for planning at any level, and Ss need just

open their mouths and utter what is prescribed. In between these two extremes lie all the other contexts in which humans speak, all requiring more or less discourse level planning.

5.3.1 What does research into the structure of language above sentence level suggest about the nature of language?

Language structure does not end at sentence level. The rules of Discourse structure and organisation are only beginning to be explored, but research so far shows clearly that rules exist for the organisation of both dialogue and monologue. If, when using language, Ss depart seriously from the accepted discourse rules of the language it will be noticed by Ls. The result will be either a breakdown in communication, or a questioning of the Ss' social competence— their ability to behave in a socially acceptable manner. In either case if Ss, (especially native speakers), consistently fail to follow the discourse conventions of the language, they are likely to find it difficult to interact with other people in any capacity.

5.3.2 What does research into the structure of language above sentence level suggest about language learning and teaching?

Learners need to be made aware that there are structure rules that operate above the sentence level. Although they have not yet been at all fully described, learners should realise they exist and are affected, like all other language use, by context. When planning speech then, Ss have first to identify what type of discourse they are proposing to participate in. Ss then have to consider context (i.e. a conversation with friends will

still have rules of turn taking, but interrupting will probably be much more acceptable than in a conversation with superiors), to decide how the discourse rules for such a discourse type should be applied in the given situation.

5.4 Sentence Plans

Let us assume that Ss have correctly identified the type of discourse that they are taking part in, the context in which it is taking place and where in the discourse sequence a particular sentence is going to be uttered. Before actually composing the sentence Ss have to plan how to express the intention that the sentence is to convey. They have to decide for example, how much detail they want to give, whether they want to emphasise a particular aspect of the meaning and whether they want to express themselves directly or indirectly.

Usually, unless they have a specific reason not to do so, Ss follow the *SIMPLICITY CRITERIA*. This follows logically from what we saw when looking at the comprehension of spoken language in chapter 2. Ls can assume that Ss are following the Reality and Cooperative principles and want Ls to understand. Ss will therefore express what they want to say in the simplest way possible, in order to make it as easy as possible for the listener to understand their intended meaning.

What is actually meant by 'simple'? Experiments show that for certain areas of meaning in English, the majority of people express themselves in very similar ways. Thus:

- a) (Clark and Clark, 1977) Affirmative statements are preferred to negative ones.

The doctor is a woman., rather than *The doctor is not a man.*

b) (Flores D'Arcais, 1970) Comparisons are expressed from the positive end down.

The crane is larger than the lorry,. rather than *The lorry is smaller than the crane.*

c) (Osgood, 1971) Vertical arrays are expressed Top down not Bottom up.

A is above B,. rather than *B is below A.*

d) (Clark, 1970a) Events in time are expressed from first to last.

A happens before B,. rather than *B happens after A.*

If Ss wish to express a particular intention, emphasising a specific aspect of what they are saying, they may of course choose not to follow the above. However, in most cases, where what Ss intend to express is straightforward, it seems that the Simplicity Criteria apply.

5.4.1 What does this suggest about the nature of language?

Spoken language is, on the whole, naturally uttered in as simple a way as will allow Ss to express their intentions clearly. This statement is supported by evidence from the comprehension of spoken language which suggested that spoken sentences are rarely very long or structurally complex and are often, by the standards of written language, imperfect. We saw also that when Ss speak, they want to be understood by their Ls. The more simply Ss express themselves, the less difficult it is for Ls to process the language they hear. Consequently, the more likely it is that Ls will understand the meaning of what is said, thereby ensuring that Ss will achieve their purposes for speaking.

5.4.2 What does this suggest about language learning

and teaching?

a) Teachers and learners should recognise that simple spoken language is natural spoken language. The production of simple, clear, comprehensible spoken language that expresses the desired intention is, therefore, a valid aim for language learners.

b) If learners are to become capable of expressing themselves clearly and simply, it is not necessary for the great majority to know a huge variety of ways of expressing the same functions. Any function (thanking-greeting-offering-requesting), in any language, has many different possible exponents for use in different contexts. Learners training to be official interpreters or diplomats may need to be able to produce a wide variety of different exponents, suitable for a variety of more or less formal contexts, for each function in a foreign language. Most learners, however, are unlikely to need to express themselves with such subtlety. For them, following the simplicity criteria, it seems sensible to focus on fluent use of 2 or 3 contextually neutral ways of expressing a particular function.

c) Teachers and learners should realise that oral (and usually written) production of the L2 will almost always be at a structurally simpler level than the language that learners are able to comprehend. Structurally more complex listening and reading input should, therefore, not be expected to lead to equally complex spoken (or written) output.

5.5 Carrying Out the Speech Plan

Despite the planning that appears to be necessary, and that does seem to occur, before people actually utter speech, it is clear from previ-

ous chapters that what is actually produced is often, by the standards of accuracy required in written language, 'imperfect'. The example below (Maclay and Osgood, 1959:25) demonstrates this.

As far as I know, no one yet has done the/ in a way obvious now and interesting problem of{PAUSE} doing a/ in a sense a structural frequency study of the alternative {PAUSE} syntactical [UH]/ in a given language, say like English, the alternative [UH] possible structures and how/what their hierarchical {PAUSE} probability of occurrence-structure is.

This is an authentic example of spoken language where the planning has not resulted in the production of well formed sentences. It is full of hesitations, pauses and false starts (marked by/). This has nothing to do with the speaker's level of education, since the above example comes from a lecture given at a Psycholinguistics conference. It seems then that often there are factors that interfere either with the planning process itself or with Ss' successful implementation of their plan.

Three factors that may make it difficult to plan properly or to execute a plan once it has been made have been identified. First of all the difficulty of the topic that Ss are trying to talk about may affect how rapidly and fluently they express themselves. In an experiment, Taylor (1969) selected 4 single words that varied according to their frequency in the language as a whole and according to the abstractness or concreteness of the concepts they referred to. The words chosen were :

	CONCRETE	ABSTRACT
HIGH FREQUENCY	car (2.27secs)	joy (2.71secs)
LOW FREQUENCY	kaleidoscope (3.49secs)	affluence (3.76 secs)

He gave these words to his subjects one by one and asked them to use the words in a sentence as quickly as they could. The numbers in brackets after each word refer to the average time they spent planning before beginning the sentence. These show that with low frequency words (less familiar topics) and more abstract words, the subjects required longer to plan what they were going to say. If this extra time had not been available it is likely that their planning might not have been completed and hence their utterance might have been imperfect.

A second, connected, factor that may influence the fluency of a speaker's production is the difficulty of what one is trying to say about a topic. Levin (1967) performed an experiment in which he used as his subjects two groups of children. He showed these children two balloons of different sizes and colours. The larger balloon was filled with gas and the smaller with air. When he let go of the balloons the larger one rose into the air and the smaller one fell slowly to the ground. He then asked the children two questions that he wanted them to answer orally. To begin he asked them 'what happened when I let go of the balloons?'. The children were able to describe what they had seen fluently, with very little hesitation or pause. He then asked them 'why did it happen?'. They found the explanation to be much more difficult and were unable to answer with the same fluency as they had previously. Here then the complexity of what they were being asked to speak about affected the quality of the speech that they produced. It is, therefore, possible that in speech it is easier to be fluent when narrating a series of events or describing a scene, a place or a person, than when being asked to explain cause and effect or make comparisons.

Finally, social factors may also affect a speaker's fluency. Social factors may make Ss anxious in a number of ways. The topic being

talked about may be one that the Ss know they are unfamiliar with (e.g. the American space programme) or one that they are not used to talking about openly (e.g. personal feelings about somebody's death). The Ls too may cause the Ss to feel anxious, for example, if the Ss are unsure about the Ls' attitude to the topic under discussion, or do not know how much shared knowledge they can assume. As a result Ss may feel that they must be careful about what they say and thus, concentrate too much on planning and too little on actually uttering what they want to say. Lastly, Ss may be so keen to participate in the conversation and so worried about missing their turn, that they begin speaking before they have fully planned what they want to say. This may again lead to 'imperfect' production of the utterance.

5.5.1 What does the lack of fluency with which many people speak in their L1 suggest about the nature of language?

a) That despite the planning that takes place, what is actually produced is often imperfect in the sense that it does not match up to the standards of accuracy demanded by grammar books.

b) That some topics are less frequently talked about and/or more abstract than others, and that these tend to be more difficult for many people to talk about confidently and fluently.

c) That certain types of speech (e.g. narration) are structurally and conceptually easier to plan than others (e.g. exposition). The simpler the plan, the more likely the utterance is to be fluent.

d) That spoken language always occurs in a social setting of some kind. If aspects of this setting induce anxiety in a S, this may affect his

ability to plan and produce fluent speech.

5.5.2 What does the lack of fluency with which many people speak in their L1 suggest about language learning and teaching?

a) Teachers should not expect learners to produce grammatically perfect language when they are expressing themselves freely in any L2.

b) Teachers should accept that learners will make errors when speaking freely. If teachers want learners to be willing to experiment with the spoken language, they should not interrupt them to correct their errors. If teachers do constantly correct learners' errors while they are speaking, the teachers are likely to create anxiety. Such anxiety is likely to lead to more rather than fewer errors.

c) This is not to say that teachers should entirely ignore the errors made. While learners are using the language, teachers should listen to the errors they make and note down any made by a number of learners and those that clearly interfere with communication. These errors can then be dealt with, via more controlled practice, in a subsequent class.

d) The topics that teachers choose for their learners to talk about in the freer stages of an oral class should initially be everyday topics that everyone is likely to have something to say about and to know some vocabulary for (e.g. families, homes, jobs, schools). Once learners have gained confidence from realising that they can talk about such simple topics in the L2, they will probably be more prepared to try to speak about more complex matters.

e) Since social anxiety is clearly something that all humans are affected by to a greater or lesser extent, the classroom atmosphere should

be as unthreatening and supportive as possible. This will help learners feel confident that they will not be mocked or criticised if they make mistakes.

SUMMARY

In this chapter we have said:

1. People always speak to each other for a purpose. It is unusual for people to speak to each other about information that is already known to all participants. Purposes can be very straightforward and direct (e.g. *'I'm sorry to be late,'*) or potentially unclear and indirect (e.g. *'Do you like that dress?'*). Purposes can be very businesslike (e.g. *'I can offer you 1000 sets at \$350 each,'*) or social (e.g. *'How are you?'*). Each purpose can potentially be expressed in many different ways. It is impossible for L2 learners to learn all the ways in which all purposes can be expressed. Teachers need to decide what purposes are likely to be most important to learners and which ways of expressing such purposes are likely to be most suitable for the situations in which learners will most often find themselves.

2. Before they speak, Ss have a lot of planning to do. In order to plan successfully they require both linguistic and non-linguistic information. In reality the five stages of the planning process are probably a single set of overlapping stages. Since normal fluent speech does not consist of single utterances with long gaps between them, it seems likely that speakers plan and speak simultaneously.

3. All languages are structured at the Discourse level. Discourse structure has not yet been fully described for any language. It is, how-

ever, very clear when Discourse rules have not been followed since the language produced appears strange in some way. Different languages have more or less different discourse rules. Learners need to be taught the discourse rules of the L2, insofar as they have been described, if they are to produce appropriate spoken (and written) language.

4. If spoken language is judged by the standards of grammaticality expected of written language, it appears to be full of 'errors'. Such 'errors', incomplete sentences, repetitions, and hesitations are a normal part of any spoken language. Teachers should understand that this is so and should not try to make L2 learners produce unnatural 'error-free' spoken language. For at least some of the time, learners should be encouraged to use the language that they know to achieve their speaking purposes without worrying about the accuracy of the language that they are using. This is not to say that teachers should always ignore all 'errors'. As will be seen in Chapter 7, some 'errors' affect the comprehensibility of what is said more than others. Teachers need to point out such 'errors' and provide further practice of correct forms.

5. The topic being spoken about, what is being said about it and Ss' level of anxiety can all affect the fluency of what is said. Teachers need to try and ensure that, for beginners especially, learners are familiar with the topic they are being asked to talk about. They should also be aware that certain discourse structures (e.g. narrative and instruction) are simpler to plan than others (e.g. cause and effect) and so will be easier for learners to cope with in the L2. Whatever learners are being asked to talk about, they are more likely to be willing to do so if the atmosphere in the classroom is unthreatening. Teachers need, therefore, to try and establish a supportive, cooperative classroom atmosphere in which all learners will feel able to 'risk' trying out their command of the spoken language.

FURTHER READING

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- A. Garnham: *Psycholinguistics—Central Topics*. Routledge. 1985. Chapter 9.
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6

WHAT PSYCHOLINGUISTICS TELLS US ABOUT LANGUAGE AND LEARNING

In the last four chapters we have discussed how psycholinguists think that people produce and comprehend spoken and written language. This chapter first considers what conclusions can be drawn about the features of spoken and written language, and about the part played by the memory in any use of language. Next, it considers what learners need to know about the language system itself, in order to produce and comprehend language, and the implications of psycholinguistic evidence for the teaching of language skills. Finally, there is a brief discussion of the characteristics a language teaching method, incorporating what is implied, should have.

6.1 The Features of Written and Spoken Language and the Role of Memory

6.1.1 Spoken language

Whenever people utter or listen to spoken language, they do so for

a purpose. Speakers (Ss) speak to have some kind of effect on listeners (Ls). Ls listen to interpret what Ss' intended effect actually is.

Spoken language does not usually follow grammar rules as rigidly as written language. Although speech is thought to be planned, its fluency may be affected by the difficulty of the topic itself, by the complexity of what the Ss' are trying to say about it, by the anxiety that they feel about the social or situational context in which they are speaking or by the reaction of the Ls. As a result, the speech plan is rarely perfectly carried out in normal speech. Ls therefore have to be able to cope with spoken language that contains hesitations, repetitions, words that are not clearly enunciated, sounds that are imperfectly formed, irregular patterns of stress and intonation, all potentially uttered in a variety of different accents and dialects.

These 'imperfections' on the part of the Ss can, in fact, help the Ls. As a result of the hesitations and repetitions, typical of normal speech, more words are used to express fewer meanings. The spoken output contains a great deal of redundant information. Consequently, it is not usually necessary for Ls to hear and process every word that Ss utter in order to understand what they mean. It is the Ss' meaning that the Ls are interested in, not the exact words used to express that meaning.

Ls are further helped by being able to assume that Ss are following the Reality Principle and the Cooperative Principle and by the fact that spoken language usually follows the Simplicity Criteria. Overall, therefore, Ls can usually assume that Ss want them to understand what they are saying, and that Ss will generally express their intended meaning in the most straightforward way possible.

Both Ss, in trying to produce utterances that are appropriate to the discourse and situational contexts in which they are speaking, and Ls, in

trying to interpret what is being said, use both linguistic and non-linguistic knowledge stored in their long-term memories.

6.1.2 Written language

As with spoken language, written language is always used for a purpose. People read a text because they think that it will enable them to find answers to questions that they are interested in answering. People write to express an intention or opinion or to give information of some kind to a particular reader or group of readers. There are, of course, many different purposes for reading and writing and different purposes will require different reading and writing styles.

In general, written language is structurally more 'correct' than spoken language. It has clear word and sentence boundaries and its information is more densely packed. More is said in fewer words. However, written language also contains both structural and contextual redundancy and this can help readers (Rs) to interpret the text.

Written language is often structurally more complex than spoken language. This is because when people write they have time to think about what they want to write and are able to return to what they have written and revise it as often as they wish. This greater structural complexity is one factor that may make a text difficult to understand. Others are how familiar Rs are with the topic and whether or not writers (Ws) are expressing their meaning directly or indirectly.

When people read in their L1 they read to find out the answers to explicit or implicit questions. To find these answers Rs do not usually read every word in the text. Rs move their eyes across and down the text stopping at groups of words (fixations) to check for meaning. The speed with which people read depends on their purpose for reading and on how

wide a range of possible meanings their brain has to choose from at every fixation. Efficient Rs use the structural and contextual redundancy of the language, their understanding of what they have already read and the general knowledge they already have to predict what will come next and so narrow down the number of possible choices that the brain has to consider at any fixation.

Both Ws, when choosing how to express their intended meaning for the audience that they have in mind, and Rs, when interpreting Ws' meaning, rely not only on their linguistic knowledge, but also on their general knowledge of the context in which they are reading and writing. Such knowledge, whether specifically linguistic or contextual, is stored in the long-term memory.

6.1.3 Memory

It is thought that the memory can be divided into two 'compartments': the short-term memory (STM) and the long-term memory (LTM).

The STM has a capacity that is limited both in terms of the amount of information that it can process and in terms of how long it is able to retain what it holds. Due to this limited capacity it can only play a role during part of the language production and comprehension process.

During the speech planning process the short-term memory is only involved in the very last stages. During the comprehension process, conversely, it seems to be in the short-term memory that the incoming written or spoken words are first processed in order to identify their literal propositional meaning. The long-term memory is the permanent store for all the linguistic and non-linguistic information that people have learned or acquired as a result of their life experience.

People's memories contain linguistic information about all the languages they know. Such information may include (depending on how well they know a particular language) structural information at discourse, sentence and constituent levels, knowledge of vocabulary and of the phonetic and prosodic features of the language.

In order to utilise this linguistic information to produce and comprehend language it is necessary to use *non-linguistic information*. Such information may be specific L1 (or L2/L3...) cultural knowledge relating to the particular use of a particular language in a particular context. For example, the cultural knowledge of how the L1 is used enables L1 Ss and Ws to judge accurately what they can expect their Ls or Rs to know already and what level of politeness the context demands. Where such specific information is not available, for example when using a L2, language users can turn to their LTM for knowledge of how people usually behave in similar situations. On the basis of this knowledge they are likely to be able to assess what, in their experience, it is usually appropriate to mean or to understand in a given context.

It is only through the active integration of the linguistic and non-linguistic knowledge stored in the LTM that people are able to use language effectively and appropriately.

6.2 What Knowledge about the Language System Itself Does a Second Language Learner Need?

In order to be able to produce and comprehend language, learners require a sound understanding of the language system and an adequate

vocabulary. Specific groups of learners, with very clearly defined needs, may only require sufficient knowledge of the system to satisfy those needs. For example, people learning English to read journals about Marine Engineering may only require sufficient knowledge of English syntax and vocabulary to be able to do that. Most learners in the Chinese context do not have such closely specifiable needs. The discussion below refers to such learners.

6.2.1 Sound level

Learners need to be able to produce and comprehend the sounds and prosodic features of the L2. In terms of production, they must, when speaking the language, be intelligible to listeners. This does not mean that the goal should be native speaker pronunciation and intonation patterns. As we have seen, native speakers themselves vary considerably in the extent to which they follow the 'rules'. For some widely used languages such as English there are, anyway, several sets of rules (i.e. American versus British English pronunciation). The aim should be pronunciation whose formal correctness is sufficiently good to ensure that Ls are easily able to understand the content of what is said. In terms of comprehension, learners must be able to cope with the L2 sounds in natural speech uttered at normal speed in a variety of common accents.

6.2.2 Word level

Any language has a huge number of words in its vocabulary. As a result, learners have to make choices about which words to learn. Such choices should be based on the division between active and passive vocabulary.

Learners' active vocabulary, that is, the words they can both recog-

nise and use, should include the structure words of the L2. These are limited in number, occur frequently and are crucial to the production and comprehension of most spoken and written language. When considering which of the huge number of content words learners should have in their active vocabulary, teachers should remember that the frequency of a word in the language and the recency with which it has been used seem to affect the ease with which it can be retrieved from the mental lexicon. Choices should be made according to the learners' likely vocabulary needs, bearing in mind the frequency of possible items in the language as a whole. The input given to learners, and the output expected from them, should reflect the need for frequent recycling of words that are thought to be necessary for their active vocabulary.

Words that are part of learners' passive vocabulary, words they can usually recognise and understand but do not use themselves, can be dealt with briefly by the teacher as they occur for the first time. Thereafter, individual learners can themselves decide how much energy they wish to apply to learning them.

Wherever possible, parts of speech and common affixes of all words in the active vocabulary, should be identified when first encountered. This information can help learners to use structural redundancy clues when listening to and reading the L2.

6.2.3 Syntax level

We have seen above that spoken and written language vary in the complexity of their structure and in the density of the information that they carry. In general, the study of grammar is based on the written form of language. Grammar books often appear to assume that all structure patterns within the language are of equal frequency and importance. All

syntactic structures are thus given more or less equal weighting. In reality, within any language, different sentence patterns vary in the frequency with which they occur. Different forms of the constituents that make up such sentences (e.g. noun phrases or verb phrases) also vary in frequency. Particular parts of speech characteristically occur in particular positions within sentences.

It is common to find learners who, after many years of study, are unable consistently to produce grammatically well-formed, simple, written sentences and simple comprehensible spoken sentences in a variety of contexts. One way to enable learners to achieve the ability to express and comprehend simple meanings might be to begin by highlighting the syntactic regularities in language. Teachers might, for example, begin by introducing common sentence patterns used to express common meanings and demonstrate how they are built up from a largely predictable set of constituent parts, phrases, which in turn contain a number of obligatory and optional parts of speech. Examination of the roles played by different parts of speech in the expression of meaning within the sentence, and of the ways that changes in word order affect meaning, might also help learners to become more aware of the natural redundancy of language, with positive effects on their listening and reading skills.

The teaching of grammar at more advanced levels would then build on what had gone before. By looking at the more complex exponents of sentence constituents, the correspondingly more complex sentence patterns and meanings expressed would follow naturally.

6.2.4 Discourse level

Meaning in language is rarely expressed in isolated sentences. Just as within a sentence the meaning of an individual item depends largely

on the items surrounding it, so in a text the meaning of a particular sentence is affected by the surrounding context. Texts above the sentence (or single utterance) level are structured.

Discourse structure has not yet been fully described for any language but it is already clear that different types of discourse have different functions and different structural and organisational characteristics. When these are not complied with, either in spoken or written language, it is noticeable and may seriously interfere with comprehension.

Learners need to be trained to identify the principal function of the texts they are expected to comprehend and produce. They then need to be trained to be able to anticipate the structural and organisational characteristics that they are likely to come across as they read/listen or that they should follow as they write/speak. They need training in the ways that discourse markers can help to show how sentences within texts are related to one another, and in the use of cohesive and deictic devices.

6.3 Using the Language: Skills Teaching

6.3.1 All skills

Different learners in different circumstances are likely to have more or less different purposes for which they need to use language. Before deciding how much training learners need in different skills, it is therefore necessary to identify their main purposes for learning the language.

All language use involves the integration of linguistic and non-linguistic information. In their L1, learners do this automatically. They need to be explicitly shown that the non-linguistic information that they have can also be of use to them when they use the L2.

Although below each skill is dealt with separately, it must be recognised that this division is often artificial and that people rarely use only a single skill when they use language. People speak and listen, they listen and write, they read and write. In training learners to use the L2, teachers ought to bear this fact in mind and ensure that, at least some of the time, the activities that they ask learners to do involve the *integration of more than a single skill*.

6.3.2 Speaking

Oral activities can vary from those where the language to be used is strictly controlled to those where it is not controlled at all. While very controlled oral activities like drilling, substitutions and transformations and memorisation of dialogues may be helpful for 'fixing' particular structures in the long-term memory, they do not bear any relationship to normal use of spoken language and so should not be overused. When they are used, teachers should try to contextualise them in situations in which they might actually occur (see Littlewood for ideas on how to do this).

Less controlled oral activities should always have a goal and it should be clear to the learners whether or not the goal has been achieved. For example, just asking learners to 'discuss' a topic does not provide a goal. Asking them to 'discuss and decide which of three possibilities you agree with and why', does.

Learners' L2 oral output will almost certainly be less sophisticated than the level of language that they are able to understand. Since this is so, when introducing ways of doing things with language (performing functions), teachers should consider whether learners really need actively to know a dozen ways of, for example, making a suggestion. Possibly,

learning one or two situationally neutral forms would be less confusing and also sufficient for the great majority of contexts in which learners are likely to find themselves.

The language learners produce will also (in free activities), inevitably, contain errors. The extent to which errors occur is likely to be affected by what they are asked to do. Activities that are based around topics that the learners are familiar with and set in contexts that do not make them feel anxious will help to minimise error. The majority of errors that are made will not impede communication and so should not be corrected while the activity is going on. If the teacher considers that some of the errors that are being made are important, they can be dealt with in a more controlled way after the activity has been completed.

The concept of 'Appropriacy' in language use has been widely discussed in the last few years. Using language appropriately depends on knowing the 'Rules of Use' of the language. So far, these rules have not been at all fully described for any language and, in a sense, the very word 'Rules' often gives the wrong impression. Although some aspects of social interaction, for example, greeting and leave taking, are so ritualised that one can say that there are 'Rules' to follow, one cannot say that Rules of Use are as fixed as rules of grammar. In the majority of cases, individual users of a language use their language in an individual way. As a result, while generally acceptable routine formulae can be practised and memorised for a few very specific areas of interaction, most aspects of appropriacy cannot be systematically taught. Where the teacher is aware of specific differences in appropriate language use between the L1 and L2 cultures, the learners should be told. It should, however, be made clear that these differences may not always be true of every member of the L2 culture. For example, the fact that money and salaries are taboo

topics to many westerners, is very often, but not always, true. Cross cultural studies of the Rules of Use in different societies suggest that, generally, it is reasonable to assume that contexts in which people would be more formal, polite and respectful in L1 society are also contexts in which they should be more formal in L2 society. The same is true, in reverse, of contexts where people would normally expect to be more informal and relaxed.

6.3.3 Listening

Listening is an active process. Since people always listen to a speaker for some purpose and so know why they are listening before they begin, learners should be given a reason for listening before they begin to listen to what is said. While listening it is normal to 'support' the speaker by physical and verbal gestures (such as nods of the head or utterances like 'mm', 'yeah' and 'uhuh') that show the speaker he still has the listener's attention.

Comprehension of the speaker's message is based in part on contextual clues (e.g. the topic, who the speaker is, and where the conversation is taking place). Teachers should help learners to activate their non-linguistic knowledge, by providing contextual information before they begin listening, so that they can begin to predict what they are likely to hear.

Learners should be reminded that normal spoken language contains a lot of redundancy and also that they can assume that Ss want them to understand what is being said. Learners need not usually worry that they will miss the whole meaning if they miss individual words or even phrases.

Spoken language is uttered in a variety of accents and dialects, and

with a range of different speeds and intonations—many of which do not follow 'ideal' rules. In order to be able to cope with such variation, learners need to be exposed to as wide a variety of input, from as wide a variety of different speakers, as possible.

Spoken and written language are not the same. Language originally written to be read is not suitable as input for listening comprehension. If such texts are to be used for listening, it is essential that the teacher first makes notes from the written text and then uses these as the basis for his oral presentation.

6.3.4 Reading

Since people always read for a purpose, learners need to be given a purpose for reading (questions to answer or tasks to complete) before they start to read. Different purposes require different reading styles which are likely to involve different types of texts. In their L1 people automatically match their reading style to text type and reading purpose. Learners need to be given practice in adapting this skill to L2 reading. They require exposure to as wide a selection of text types, demanding different reading styles, as possible. Possibilities that are available for English learners in China include, in the *China Daily*:

- a) Headlines relating to national and international topics for prediction practice.
- b) Advertisements for hotels, jobs, cars.

Television and entertainments listings. All for scanning practice.

- c) Book and film reviews, letters to the editor, tourist information.
All for skimming or more detailed reading.

Learners need to realise that their reading speed is physically limited to 4-5 fixations per second. Faster reading is a matter of using all

aspects of the syntactic and semantic context sufficiently efficiently to be able to leave the maximum amount of space between fixations and still achieve their reading purpose. Learners need practice at prediction, using linguistic and non-linguistic knowledge, both before and while reading.

Reading texts need to be chosen to take account of learners' likely reading needs and interests. The tasks that they are assigned should involve them in reading in different ways from the most rapid skim and scan to detailed stylistic analysis and should accustom them not to worry if, in certain styles of reading, they do not extract every detail from the text. The importance assigned to different reading styles should again relate to students' likely future reading needs.

When choosing reading texts, it is necessary to remember that text difficulty can depend on text topic and how directly meaning is expressed, as well as on linguistic complexity. Thus, as well as matching texts to learners' language level, it is important to consider whether students are likely to have the non-linguistic knowledge necessary to help interpret the text.

6.4 The Implications for Teaching Methods

At the *APPROACH* level any method that was based on the above implications of psycholinguistic research would recognise that human language is a system of rules for combining sounds to words to sentences to texts, and that the purpose of learning such rules is to enable people to communicate with each other. Such a method would stress that knowing a language requires its users to be able to integrate their knowledge of the language system with their non-linguistic knowledge of the specific context in which the language is being used. The method would recog-

nise that learning a language involves learning the rules of the system and how to use those rules. It would stress that learning and remembering aspects of the rule and vocabulary system is likely to be most successful when input is provided in meaningful, natural contexts, and when what is to be learned is recycled in different contexts. The types of contexts chosen would be ones that the learners would feel to be relevant to their reasons for learning the L2. The method would thus recognise that an important part of learning any L2 involves practising DOING things with the language in relevant contexts.

Moving on to the DESIGN level, any language syllabus emerging from such a method would first consider why the language was being learned. It would emphasise training both in the structures of the L2 and in the skills that the learners were most likely to need. The materials used to teach the syllabus would set the language structures and vocabulary to be learned in topical and situational contexts that would be of interest and relevance to the learners. The materials would provide a variety of more or less controlled and life-like practice activities.

PROCEDURE in the classroom would need to be flexible to accommodate a wider variety of activities than is often the case at present. Formal teaching of structure and vocabulary would still be necessary but, if learners were to have the opportunity to use what they know, less controlled activities would also be important. Teachers would have to learn the classroom techniques and organisational skills necessary to make such activities successful. They would also have to try to ensure that the atmosphere in their classrooms was one which would encourage even the most shy learners to try to use their linguistic knowledge to express and interpret meanings.

Learners in such classrooms would no longer be able to be merely

passive listeners gaining ever more knowledge about the finer points of the language system. For some of their classroom time they would be expected to try actively to use their linguistic knowledge of the L2 system, and their general knowledge of how language is normally used in the world, to help them predict and identify likely meanings in reading and listening tasks and to express their own meanings in spoken or written form.

7

FIRST AND SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION: DIFFERENT OR SIMILAR?

BEFORE YOU READ THIS CHAPTER, TRY AND ANSWER THE QUESTIONS BELOW.

- 1. Is it true to say that children acquire their L1 mainly by copying the language that they hear? If not, how might L1 acquisition take place?**
- 2. Any L2 can be more or less different from the learners' L1. Is the L2 always more difficult to learn if it is very different from the L1?**
- 3. Are all L2 errors equally important? How can teachers decide whether a language error is important or not?**
- 4. Is it reasonable to have native speaker proficiency as the goal of any L2 learning course?**
- 5. Why do different L2 learners, who are roughly the same age and speak the same L1, and who have had the same number of hours of**

- the same kind of teaching, reach different levels of L2 proficiency?
6. Why do L2 learners sometimes make errors (e.g. Chinese learners' confusion of 'he' and 'she' in English) even when they know the correct form very well?
 7. What differences are there between the way a mother uses the L1 with her child and a teacher uses the L2 with language learners?
-

7.1 Introduction

So far we have considered the mental processes that people appear to go through in order to comprehend and produce language, whatever language they speak. In this chapter, we look at attempts made to identify the processes involved in actually learning any L2. In trying to understand the processes involved in L2 learning, we will also need to consider the information available about how children acquire their L1.

It is, at present, thought that learners may become proficient in an L2 via one of two main routes. They may **LEARN** the L2, by conscious classroom focus on, or self-study of, the grammatical forms of the language and the meanings that they commonly express. Alternatively, learners may unconsciously **ACQUIRE** the forms of the L2 through using the L2 to express and interpret meanings, and/or being in an environment in which they hear it used.

Increasingly, the whole process of developing proficiency in the structures of an L2 and their use, whether conscious or not, is referred to as **Second Language Acquisition (SLA)**. In this and following chapters we will use this term when talking about the overall development of L2 ability. When referring only to conscious learning of form we will use

the words 'Learn' and 'Learning', with a capital 'L'. When discussing unconscious development of L2 structure proficiency as a result of receptive or productive use of L2, we will use 'Acquire' and 'Acquisition', with a capital 'A'.

Most learners, if they have the chance, probably develop their L2 proficiency by both Learning and Acquisition. The extent to which each route to proficiency is important will vary according to the context in which the language learning is taking place. So, for example, most learners of English in China, who have little contact with the L2 environment, are likely to depend mostly on conscious classroom Learning to improve their English, at least in the early stages. On the other hand foreigners living in China, trying to learn Chinese as an L2, will have many opportunities to Acquire the forms of the (spoken) language and how it is used from the Chinese speaking environment that surrounds them.

During the last 20 to 30 years, there has been an enormous amount of research into SLA. Some of the questions that scholars have tried to answer are:

What mental processes occur during Learning/Acquisition?

How can teachers help Learning/Acquisition take place in the most efficient possible way?

Why do people vary in the way and the speed that they learn L2s?

Why do learners who have had the same number of hours of the same sort of teaching, vary so much in their eventual level of proficiency in the L2?

Do learners become proficient more quickly if Learning or Acquisition is emphasised, or should they ideally have a combination of the two?

To what extent can understanding the way that people acquire their

L1 guide us as we try to answer these questions?

7.2 L1 Acquisition

All human beings enter the world with the same limited linguistic repertoire, initially able only to cry, gurgle or keep silent. Four or five years later, assuming they are mentally normal, they have acquired all the basic grammatical and phonological structures of their L1 and are able to use them to communicate in a wide range of contexts. Despite very different home environments, despite differences in the type and quantity of L1 input, all children from the same L1 speech community start their schooling knowing the same set of L1 structures at almost adult native speaker levels of proficiency. In doing so they appear to acquire structures in roughly the same sequence.

If children all acquire the same set of structures in the same order regardless of being brought up in different environments with exposure to different types and quantities of input, it is clearly not the input alone that leads to their acquisition of the L1. Children must "work with/use" the input in ways that help them correctly to identify the structures of the L1.

It is suggested that infants are able to start working with language almost as soon as they are born, because they all have an innate, genetic ability to acquire language. This ability is often referred to as a Language Acquisition Device (LAD). Recently, ideas about what sort of helpful information the LAD might actually contain have been influenced by theories of Universal Grammar (UG).

It is supposed that within children's LAD, at birth, are the principles of UG which all languages obey. As children mature, and become more

capable of processing the language information that is available in their surroundings, the principles of UG begin to be 'revealed'. Thus, at any given point within their first few years of life, all children have, thanks to the principles of UG, built up the most complete form of the language that they are cognitively capable of at that stage of their mental development.

UG is thought to contain a core of Linguistic Universals (LUs): structural and phonological features common to all languages. Examples of such LUs are that all languages have vowel sounds, all languages have word order rules that affect meaning, all languages have some way of marking time relationships. However, while these LUs clearly exist, they are differently realised in different languages. All languages do have vowels, but different languages use different vowels; all languages have some way of marking temporal relationships, but different languages mark them in different ways and differentiate time to varying degrees.

It is thought that all children are born with this information about LUs coded in their brains. As they become cognitively more mature, this information helps them to make sense of more and more of the language that surrounds them. Eventually, they are able unconsciously to identify the structural regularities and so work out how LUs are realised in the rules of their L1.

As well as conforming to LUs, languages also have items within them that do not follow the rules of UG. These items may be the result of the historical evolution of the language as a result of political or economic factors, or of borrowings from other languages. All languages thus contain two sets of items: a core of language specific realisations of linguistic universals and a periphery of items used only in a particular language. These items additionally vary in their Markedness. Marked items

within a language are likely to be irregular, infrequent or semantically opaque. They tend to be more peripheral and to come later in the L1 acquisition sequence.

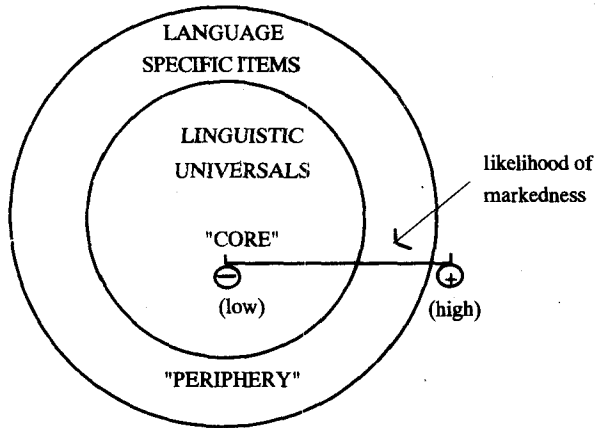


Figure 7 LINGUISTIC UNIVERSALS AND MARKEDNESS

By applying the principles of UG already encoded in their brains to the language that is addressed to them and that they hear around them, children begin subconsciously to work out the rules of their L1. This is a gradual process. It is not a matter of a child being completely unable to form questions one day and able to form them perfectly the next. Research into the language produced by children acquiring their L1 suggests that they begin by making up their own grammar. When they begin to use language themselves, what they produce is not a copy of what they hear from the adults around them. They move from one word utterances to longer utterances, combining words in ways they have never heard be-

fore, to create their own unique sentences. What they seem to be doing is Creatively Constructing the language by testing out hypotheses about how the rules of the language work. They are able to do this, despite the very limited input that they initially get, and the minimal output that they are initially able to produce, because the innate knowledge of UG in their LAD helps guide them towards linguistically possible hypotheses.

It would seem then that children acquiring their L1 test out the language. They see which of their own utterances actually DO what they intend them to do in an acceptable way, and which of their responses to input from adults or other children appear to be regarded as correct. As they increasingly identify the correct ways of expressing utterances and the helpful role of grammatical markers in establishing the meanings of utterances addressed to them, they build up a system of grammatical rules that becomes closer, and eventually very similar to, the adult system.

This is not a result of formal Learning. No adults give their children systematic grammar lessons. The grammatical system of the L1 is acquired naturally and inevitably from whatever L1 linguistic environment the children find themselves in.

7.2.1 What does L1 acquisition suggest about the nature of language?

a) The theory of UG suggests that some phonological and grammatical items are fundamental and needed by all languages. Such items in the L1 tend to be acquired earlier. More peripheral, language-specific, items are more likely to be marked in some way and to be acquired later.

b) The L1 does not have to be formally Learned. It is acquired through children's active interaction with the L1 linguistic environment.

7.2.2 What does L1 acquisition suggest about L2 language learning and teaching?

a) If linguistic universals exist and can be identified, it would seem that L2 exponents of such universals should be among the first items taught to and practised by L2 learners.

b) Since children acquiring their L1 do so through actively participating in interactions, we should consider whether it would also be helpful for L2 learners to have regular opportunities to try using whatever L2 items they know from the very beginning of their studies.

7.3 L2 Learning /Acquisition

While all normal children successfully acquire the forms of their L1 without any formal teaching, L2 learners are far more variable in the speed at which, and the eventual level to which, they learn/acquire any L2. Answers to the questions of why this is so and of how the processes involved in learning an L2 differ from those used to acquire the L1 have been sought for many years. So far many questions remain unresolved.

7.3.1 Contrastive Analysis (CA)

In the 1950s and early 1960s, in the heyday of Behaviourist Psychology, it was still thought that children learned their correct L1 habits by copying, ever more exactly, the sentences that they heard adults use. The concept of Acquisition and an innate language capacity had not yet emerged. It was, however, already clear that success at SLA varied considerably from person to person.

The initial attempt to account for this variation among L2 learners

focused on the extent to which learners' L1 differed from the L2 they were trying to learn. It was suggested that the greater the difference between a specific L1 and the L2 being learned, the more difficult it would be for native speakers of that L1 to learn the L2: the more the L1 would 'interfere' with the learning of the L2. If the differences between the structural systems of the L1 and the L2 could be identified and described, then teachers of the L2 would have a clear idea of which aspects of the language would be likely to cause particular problems to native speakers of a particular L1. This knowledge would enable the teachers to focus the L2 input on structures that would be most beneficial to each student.

"The teacher who has made a comparison of the Foreign Language with the L1 of the students will know better what the real problems are and can provide for teaching them" (Lado, 1957).

A rush towards providing Contrastive Analyses of the structures of major world languages followed, but the assumptions underlying Contrastive Analysis soon began to be questioned.

If it is true that most difficulties suffered by L2 learners result from the differences between their L1 and the L2 that they are learning, then the following should logically follow:

- a) Most errors that L2 learners make should be the result of differences between L1 and L2 structures. As we will see below, research shows that this is not so.
- b) If most difficulties are the result of differences between L1 and L2, one would expect, where L1 and L2 grammatical rules are very similar, that L2 learners would find it easy to learn L2 rules. This does not always happen.
- c) The ease with which L2 learners are able to judge the grammaticality of a sentence ought to depend on how similar the gram-

matical rule demonstrated in the sentence is to the corresponding rule in the L1. Thus, L2 learners with the same L1 ought to be equally successful in judging the grammaticality of L2 sentences. This is not the case.

As a result of research which focused on the above, it became obvious that CA alone was insufficient to account for why different people learn the same L2 so differently.

7.3.2 Error Analysis (EA)

Interest among researchers next moved to the kinds of errors that L2 learners made. It was thought that by studying these it would be possible to identify the learning processes that the learners were going through, and so find out how learners' L2 proficiency developed. The main source of data for EA was the large proportion of errors that could not be explained or predicted by CA.

The main problem to emerge was that of how to categorise errors. Despite many attempts, no single, generally agreed method of classification has yet been established.

The only division that is widely agreed on is that between global and local errors. Burt and Kiparsky (1972) collected several thousand incorrect English sentences written by adult learners of English from all over the world. They then chose sentences containing two or more errors and asked native speakers to judge the sentences' comprehensibility, as the errors were corrected one by one. For example:

Original sentence: *English language use much people.*

- i) Insert article: *The English language use much people.*
- ii) Many: *English language use many people.*
- iii) S-O inversion: *Much people use English language.*

Native speakers found version (iii) the easiest to understand.

Original sentence: *Not take this bus we late for school.*

- i) Insert pronoun: *We not take this bus we late for school.*
- ii) Insert do: *Do not take this bus we late for school.*
- iii) Insert will: *Not take this bus we will late for school.*
- iv) Insert if: *If not take this bus we late for school.*
- v) Insert be: *Not take this bus we be late for school.*

Native speakers found version (iv) the easiest to understand.

From native speakers' reactions to similar sentences, Burt and Kiparsky identified the two types of error noted above: first, global errors such as the subject-object inversion above, which affect the meaning of the whole sentence, or meaning relations between sentences, and which can, therefore, seriously interfere with communication and, secondly, local errors, such as article omission, that affect only the meaning of single constituents within the sentence. Local errors are less likely than global errors to block communication.

This distinction between types of error is helpful in that it reconfirms that L2 learners need to be able to control the grammatical system at the sentence level, and above, if they are to use the language to communicate successfully. It does not, though, help categorise errors into the sorts of clearly defined, smaller groups that might shed light on the L2 learners' mental processes.

SLA researchers now began to contrast L2 errors with those made by children acquiring their L1. Research studies, carried out on child L2 learners (Dulay and Burt, 1974), and adult learners (White, 1977), that

considered the extent to which L2 error was a result of 'interference' from the L1, showed that, at most, 30% of errors could be traced back to the learner's L1. Of the other 70%, the majority of errors were developmental errors, very similar to those made by children acquiring their L1.

Among the most common types of error were:

- i) Those omitting grammatical morphemes: e.g. He hit car.
- ii) Those that double marked semantic features such as 'Time':
e.g. She didn't went back.
- iii) Those that overgeneralised rules: e.g. womans.
- iv) Those overusing a correct form in incorrect contexts:
e.g. I see her yesterday. Her dance with my friend.
- v) Those that failed to cope with the complexity of word order; especially in constructions that required the learner to reverse rules that he had already learned correctly:
e.g. You are reading. What you are reading?

Such evidence suggested that the processes of L1 and L2 development may, in the early stages at least, have a great deal in common.

7.3.3 What do CA and EA suggest about the nature of language?

a) The intelligibility of language is affected more by errors involving meaning relations within or between whole sentences than by those involving only constituents of the sentence. Understanding minor propositions expressed by the individual constituents does not guarantee that the main proposition expressed by the whole sentence will be understood. Similarly, being able to produce correct phrases at constituent level is, alone, insufficient to ensure easy straightforward communication.

b) L1 and L2 learners, although usually of markedly different ages, make many of the same kinds of mistakes when learning language. This suggests that they may go through similar stages and similar mental processes in building up their knowledge of the language system.

7.3.4 What do CA and EA suggest about language learning and teaching?

a) If the UG hypothesis is true, then some CA, focusing on the differing ways that a particular L1 and L2 express linguistically universal meanings, might be useful for L2 learners and teachers.

b) Not all errors are equal in their impact on communication. When the focus of a language class is on fluency, the teacher should concentrate on identifying global not local errors for later controlled practice.

c) If the research evidence is to be believed and L1 and L2 learners both follow a broadly similar developmental route in their learning/acquisition of the language system, then, when planning the structure part of L2 syllabuses, perhaps the stages followed by L1 learners should be considered.

7.4 Hypothesis Testing and Interlanguage in Second Language Acquisition

As we have seen above, it is now generally agreed that children Acquire rather than consciously Learn their L1. The fact that such a large proportion of the errors made by L2 learners have been found to be similar to those made by L1 acquirers has led some SLA researchers to consider how closely the processes of developing L2 proficiency parallel

those of L1 Acquisition. It should be noted that much of the work in SLA has been done in the USA, with subjects who are learning their L2 (English) in an L2 environment. It seems sometimes to be forgotten by researchers that even learners such as these are often likely to spend some of their time Learning the language in a classroom, as well as Acquiring it from interactions with their L2 environment. The question of whether such formal classroom learning is of value will be considered in Chapter 8.

SLA researchers, working in this context, have proposed that L2 learners may develop their understanding of the structure rules of the L2 in the same way as L1 learners, by testing out hypotheses about how the language works. The data on which they base these hypotheses is the L2 being used by people around them and the extent to which they are successful in their own day to day L2 interactions. Does a particular utterance in a particular context have the intended effect? Does it successfully DO what it was intended to DO?

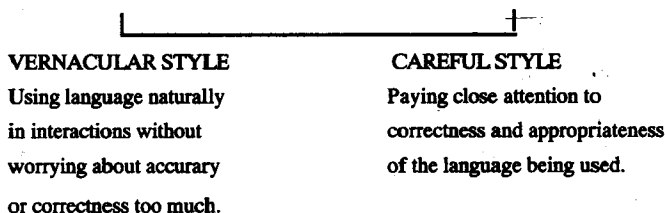
Just as L1 children, through forming correct hypotheses, are able to build up their knowledge of the language structure from scratch and eventually reach native speaker proficiency, so, it is suggested by some, can L2 learners. At any given moment in the L2 learning process learners have a partially correct mental picture of the structure of the L2. This is made up of a collection of more or less correct hypotheses about the L2 grammatical system, and has been named, by Selinker (1972), INTER-LANGUAGE.

The concept of individual Interlanguages allows us to begin to account for the variability between L2 learners who have seemingly had the same amount of the same type of exposure to the L2. At any particular moment during the SLA process, individuals will have developed

their own set of varyingly accurate hypotheses about the structure of the L2: their own Interlanguage. Individuals will vary from one another in the range and number of correct grammatical rules of English which they have successfully fixed in their long-term memory as a result of their exposure to the language.

L2 learners, however, vary not only in the extent to which they are able to recognise correct grammatical forms, but also in how accurately and fluently they are able to use this knowledge in real-time production and comprehension of the L2, in styles appropriate to the context. The concept of Interlanguage thus needs to be expanded to take this into account. Tarone (1983) introduced the idea of the Continuum of Competence. This refers to the extent to which each correct hypothesis about the L2 grammatical system is likely to appear, correctly applied, in actual production or to be used correctly to help comprehension. Tarone labels the two ends of the continuum Careful Style and Vernacular Style.

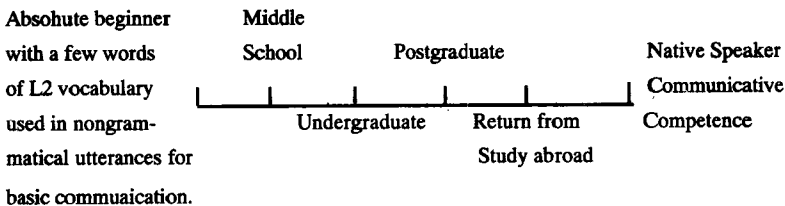
Figure 8 THE COMPETENCE CONTINUUM
(TARONE 1983)



Any grammatical form in an Interlanguage can potentially be used at any point along the continuum. Most L2 learners are likely to be able to use the rules they know with varying accuracy at different points along

the continuum. This helps to account for the observed fact that L2 learners are not consistently error-free in their production of a particular grammatical structure. Accurate spoken and written production on several occasions may suggest that learners have correctly identified a particular grammatical rule. On other occasions they may fail to apply the same rule correctly. Tarone suggests that for any given learner it is easier consistently to apply a known rule correctly at the careful end of the continuum, in, for example, a piece of formal writing. At the vernacular end, on the other hand, the same learner may often incorrectly apply the same rule. This is not because he/she does not know the rule. It is rather that the rule is not sufficiently well embedded in the long-term memory for it to be consistently correctly applied in the more hurried circumstances of normal spoken interaction. A good example of this among even very advanced Chinese learners of English is the very inconsistent way in which the pronouns 'she' and 'he' are used in speech. A result of this variable performance is that L2 learners, in contrast to children learning their L1, very rarely reach native speaker levels of proficiency. Most L2 learners will always be somewhere along the Interlanguage Continuum.

Figure 9 THE INTERLANGUAGE CONTINUUM



Almost all learners, however long they study the L2, continue to

have some grammatical or phonological rules that they are unable to apply correctly in all contexts. That is not to say that it is impossible for learners to continue to develop their interlanguage. To do so, however, requires learners to try continuously and actively both to widen the range of their structural knowledge and to develop the accuracy with which, and the range of contexts in which, they apply the rules that they know. Most learners at some point reach a stage where this active involvement in the SLA process decreases. Learners decide that they know enough or that they no longer have sufficient time. At such a point further development of the Interlanguage is likely to be slight.

7.4.1 What does the concept of Interlanguage suggest about the nature of language?

a) Very few L2 learners are ever able consistently to produce the forms of the L2 to native speaker levels of accuracy and appropriacy to context. It appears, therefore, that however much time and energy is spent on learning a L2, most people are capable of reaching such levels of proficiency only in their L1.

b) From broadly similar amounts and types of L2 data, individuals at any given moment have their own unique mental picture of the L2 grammatical structure, their personal interlanguage. This varies from other people's, both in the extent to which grammatical forms are correctly identified and are consistently available for use.

c) The extent to which a known grammatical form is able to be correctly used varies among L2 learners (and native speakers) according to the amount of concentration that can be given to correctness and accuracy in a given instance of language use. Thus, casual (vernacular) lan-

guage, though comprehensible, is often structurally 'imperfect', especially in spoken form.

7.4.2 What does Interlanguage suggest about language learning and teaching?

a) It is unrealistic to have native speaker levels of proficiency as the aim of any L2 training course. This is especially true, as we shall see below, for adolescents and adults, and for those learning in a foreign language environment. Such learners constitute the great majority of language learners worldwide.

b) Learners who are correctly able to complete written tests of grammatical form, or who can cope well with controlled oral practice drills using correct grammar and pronunciation, will not necessarily be able to use what they appear to know in natural, real-life interaction. If teachers want their learners to be able to use what they know, they need to provide them with opportunities to use the language in casual/vernacular as well as in formal/careful contexts.

c) Since in such casual contexts it is normal for the language produced to be grammatically less than perfect, teachers should be tolerant of local errors. Accuracy work should be emphasised at the more formal end of the competence continuum.

7.5 Inputs to L1 and L2 Learners

The fact remains that L2 learners, in contrast to children acquiring their L1, vary in the efficiency with which they are able to use the L2 data they receive to build and test correct hypotheses. They move along the *interlanguage continuum* at different rates and eventually reach dif-

ferent points. In trying to account for this, we need to consider what language data learners actually receive, to use as a basis for hypothesis testing. In order to begin to pose hypotheses, learners require L2 input and opportunities to use the L2 in 'real-life' contexts. What sort of language environment is provided in most L2 classrooms, and how does it differ from the language environment which enables children to acquire their L1 so effortlessly?

7.5.1 L1 input — Motherese

Most L1 input to young children initially comes from parents, especially mothers. The language used in interactions between mothers and their small children is called 'Motherese'. Research shows the main characteristics of Motherese to be that:

- mothers always talk to their children for a purpose. This might be to communicate a message or to make them aware of a point of social appropriacy. The input given demands a response. Such a response may be verbal or non-verbal. When children respond verbally, more attention is paid to the appropriacy of the response than to its formal correctness.
- motherese deals with the 'here and now'. Early interaction deals with what is in the childrens' immediate environment: what they can see, feel, hear and touch; their immediate needs and interests.
- although mother-child interactions are initially predictable, dealing with a narrow range of important topics such as food, sleep and play, as children develop, the range of topics continuously expands to cover a wider variety of different language functions. Children are encouraged to DO as much as possible

with the language that they know.

- mothers speak in short, simple, but grammatically correct sentences.

Such sentences contain more redundancy and repetition than utterances to an adult. Mothers adjust what they say according to the feedback that they get from children. If children fail to respond, or respond inappropriately, mothers repeat or rephrase or demonstrate the meaning of what they have said.

7.5.2 L2 input — Teacher talk

The only place most L2 learners are exposed to the L2 is in the classroom. The kind of language used in the classroom is known as Teacher Talk. This has also been studied and its main characteristics are that:

- like mothers, language teachers usually also use short, simple, grammatically correct sentences and general, high frequency vocabulary. They adjust their speech to reflect feedback from L2 learners. If they recognise that learners do not understand them, they too repeat, rephrase or expand the intended message.
- in contrast to mother-child interactions, typical interactions in the classroom follow a very rigid three-part pattern: Teacher initiates, learner responds, and the teacher provides feedback to the learner. An example:

Initiate: Is the clock on the wall?

Respond: Yes (it is.) (The clock is on the wall.)

Feedback: Good. The clock is on the wall.

- teachers ask a lot of unreal questions, questions to which they and the learners already know the answers. As a result, learners

are trained to use the language in unnatural ways. They are taught how to reply, but not how to initiate conversation.

- the topics dealt with, the contexts in which the L2 is set, are often uninteresting and bear little relationship to the possible needs and interests of the learners.
- teachers, not learners, do most of the talking.

7.5.3 Motherese and teacher talk

If we compare the language environments provided for L1 and L2 learners, we find that Teacher Talk:

- emphasises the production of correct grammatical forms. Teachers are not really interested in what the learners have to say. The L2 is used unrealistically for the sake of practising structures, not in order to DO things that the learners wish or need to do in the L2.
- does not focus on topics that are in the learners' 'here and now', such as topics that are of immediate relevance and interest to what are usually adult or adolescent learners.
- as a result of the above, Teacher Talk allows learners very little chance to test out what they can do with the structures that they know. There are thus few chances for learners to obtain tangible proof of their progress in the L2. This is likely to negatively affect motivation.

Much L2 input and output emphasises correctness of form, having little concern for the meanings which forms can express and the uses to which they may be put. The result is often that L2 learners may appear to be more or less equally proficient at the passive recognition of correct grammatical forms but are very varied in the extent to which they are

able to use the forms they appear to know.

L1 input and output are concerned from the very beginning with the meaning that forms express. Interactions have a real purpose that is of interest and importance to the participants. The range of functions performed and intentions expressed in such interactions is encouraged to broaden in parallel with the child's cognitive maturation. The result is that L1 native speakers are able both to recognise grammatically correct language and to use it appropriately to express desired meanings in a wide variety of contexts.

7.5.4 What do Motherese and Teacher Talk suggest about the nature of language?

a) Language is used from earliest childhood to achieve things that people want to do, to talk about topics that interest them, and to elicit information that is useful or interesting.

b) In order to use (spoken) language people need to be able to act efficiently as both listeners and speakers. People need to be able to initiate interactions as well as respond on the basis of what they understand others to be saying.

c) People naturally adjust their language according to their perceptions of the extent to which the listener understands them. Speakers need the sensitivity to realise when they are not being understood. They also need 'communication repair' skills, such as rephrasing and expanding, that can help them successfully express their meaning, even if a listener has difficulties understanding them.

7.5.5 What do Motherese and Teacher Talk suggest about language learning and teaching?

a) Teachers need to try and provide their learners with opportunities for more than merely mechanical classroom practice. If SLA does have parallels to L1 Acquisition, then both the input that they are given and the chances they have to produce the L2 should enable learners to develop and test hypotheses about how the L2 actually works in real-life. In practice, this means that teachers should:

- try to use the L2 for organisational and social purposes in the classroom from the very beginning of students' L2 learning. Activities in the classroom are, after all, a valid and naturally occurring context.
- begin the production part of language teaching by using the 'here and now'. There are a number of relevant topics within the classroom: the learners themselves—appearances, families, clothing, likes and dislikes; items found in the classroom—their shapes, sizes, colours and what they are made of. Interesting topics from outside the classroom should also be selected.
- devise language activities that enable learners to see clearly the relationships between forms and meanings, activities that expect them to show understanding of listening and reading input, by using it to DO something, activities that demand that they use the spoken or written forms of the language to achieve a certain goal.

SUMMARY

In this chapter we have said:

1. Children do not Acquire their L1 merely by copying the lan-

guage that they hear around them. It seems that all children are born with a LAD. This LAD contains certain basic information about aspects of grammatical structure that are universal to all languages. Using this basic information, children are able, through listening to and speaking the language, to build up the structure rules of their own L1. They 'creatively construct' their L1.

2. The evidence of errors made by language learners suggests that the quantity and type of errors cannot be accounted for by how similar or different the learners' L1 is to the L2 they are studying. Basing L2 teaching on those areas of the language in which L1 and L2 are most different cannot guarantee that the L2 will be learned more efficiently.

3. Categorising errors in any consistent way is very difficult. 'Global' errors that affect meaning relations within the whole sentence or between sentences are often likely to lead to breakdown in communication. 'Local' errors that affect meaning only within constituents of the sentence rarely affect the overall comprehensibility of what is said or written. It is, therefore, 'global' errors that require most attention from teachers and learners.

4. The fact that the huge majority of L2 learners, however much time they spend, rarely learn the L2 as well as children learn their L1, suggests that Native Speaker Proficiency is not a realistic goal for the majority of L2 learning programmes. Some reasons for L2 learners' 'lack of success' will be suggested in Chapter 9.

5. L2 learners are thought to 'creatively construct' their own unique interlanguage. At any given moment in the L2 learning process, each individual's interlanguage consists of those parts of the L2 structure that they have correctly identified and stored in the long-term memory for use. Different learners vary both in the number of L2 structures that they

have correctly identified and in the range of contexts in which they are able to use them in 'real-life'. As a result, within a single class of L2 learners who have had the same input and same opportunities for output, it is often the case that some learners' interlanguages are more fully developed than others'.

6. Teachers are aware that L2 learners are often inconsistent in their production of the L2. It is common that a form which is correctly produced over a period of time and so appears to have been 'learned', is later incorrectly produced. This may be due to the context in which it is being used. Language use at the 'careful' end of Tarone's competence continuum is likely to be more accurate, since there will often be time to check what is said or written. Forms which may be used correctly here may be used incorrectly at the 'vernacular' end of the continuum where the time pressure is greater. A good example of this is the use of the English pronouns 'he' and 'she' by Chinese learners. These are usually correctly produced in the written form. In conversational spoken English they seem to be randomly produced, sometimes right and sometimes wrong.

7. Children acquire their L1 in a normal language environment. Mothers use the L1 to communicate with their children for real immediate purposes and expect children to respond. Although to begin with most language will, of course, come from the mother, as children become cognitively more mature the balance of language use becomes more and more equal. When children's responses are corrected it is for social appropriacy not for grammatical form. Most learners learn their L2 in a classroom environment. Teachers use the L2 in the classroom mostly to teach the forms of the language. Interactions between learners and teacher are often artificial and rarely deal with topics that are of real in-

terest to the learners. Most 'talk' in the classroom is initiated by the teacher. Learners are rarely encouraged to initiate use of the L2 themselves and learners' output is judged for formal accuracy rather than as more or less effective communication.

FURTHER READING

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8

THE USEFULNESS OF CLASSROOM LEARNING

BEFORE YOU READ THIS CHAPTER, TRY AND ANSWER THE QUESTIONS BELOW.

1. In what circumstances, if any, is it possible to learn the structure rules of an L2 without formal classroom teaching and controlled practice? Do such circumstances exist in China?
2. Is formal classroom teaching of L2 structures most likely to affect
 - a) the order in which structures are learned?
 - b) the speed with which structures are learned?
 - c) the eventual level of L2 proficiency reached?
3. Do all L2 learners need to know all L2 structure rules equally well?
4. In a Chinese L2 learning context, what should be the balance between practice activities which emphasise accuracy and those which stress

fluency? Should this balance remain constant throughout the course or should it change over time?

8.1 The Evidence Against the Need for Classroom Learning of L2 Structures

We saw in the last chapter that researchers have found evidence that the errors made by L2 learners and L1 acquirers are often very similar. As a result it was suggested that L2 learners (like L1 acquirers) should not be expected to Learn the language through formal grammar lessons, but rather to Acquire their Interlanguage naturally, through hypothesis forming and testing as a result of interacting naturally in the L2 environment. This might be the real L2 environment or a classroom version. Further evidence that has been used to support the view that formal classroom learning of a language is of little help in SLA is provided by the Morpheme Acquisition studies.

The first major study of the order in which children acquired particular L2 (English) morphemes, was made by Dulay and Burt in 1973 and 1974. This was followed in 1975 by the first similar study of adult L2 learners of English by Bailey, Madden and Krashen. Both studies were done using the Bilingual Syntax Measure which involves a natural conversation between the subject and the researcher, guided by questions that are designed to elicit the use of particular target structures. For example, to check use of 3rd person singular 's', subjects are shown a cartoon of a very fat boy and asked why they think he is so fat. Expected responses might be—because he eats too much, because he lies in bed all day. The conversation is recorded, transcribed and then scored to see

how often a specific structure has been correctly used in a context where it is obligatory to use it. The two research projects above showed that the acquisition order of the morphemes measured was very similar for children and adults. Some 50 further studies of a similar kind have since been carried out and all point consistently to a basically common sequence of acquisition of certain grammatical morphemes in English as an L2, regardless of the learners' age and L1.

Krashen (1982) lists 9 grammatical morphemes that he claims are acquired in an unvarying order, the 'Natural Order', by learners of English as an L2. These are in four groups as shown in the table below.

Group 1:	Present Progressive Plural 's' copula 'be'	-ing (boy running) (two books) (he is big)
Group 2:	Auxiliary 'be' Articles 'a/the'	(he is running)
Group 3:	Irregular past tense forms	(she went)
Group 4:	Regular past tense forms Third person singular 's' Possessive 's'	(she stopped) (she stops) (the girl's food)

Research shows that the acquisition of the morphemes in Group 1 will always precede the acquisition of those in Group 2 and so on. It is impossible in this 'Natural Order' to 'jump' a Group—i.e. move from Group 2 to Group 4.

Further evidence of a natural sequence of development in SLA has been found in studies of the development of Interrogative and Negative

forms in English. Each of these has been found to pass through four stages, again basically regardless of the L1 of the learner. The stages for interrogatives are shown in the table below:

The Developmental Sequence for Interrogatives in English as an L2

Stage:	Sample utterance:
1 Rising intonation	(He works today?)
2 Uninverted 'WH' (+/- auxiliary)	(What he [is] saying?)
3 Overinversion	(Do you know where is it?)
4 L2 system	(Does she like what she does?)

(Larsen-Freeman, 1991:93)

This evidence of universal developmental sequences in SLA, true regardless of the learners' age and L1, have seriously called into question the necessity for, and usefulness of, formal classroom learning of the L2 language structures. It has been argued, notably by Krashen, (see 8.3.1 below) that since learners of English as an L2 apparently acquire the grammar of the language in a predictable order, regardless of whether or not they are formally taught it, such formal classroom teaching is not worthwhile.

8.2 Formal Classroom Teaching of L2 Structure

Since most L2 learning in China and the rest of the world consists precisely of such formal classroom teaching, focusing explicitly on the structure of the language, it is necessary to consider closely whether or not it does appear to have any effect on the SLA process.

8.2.1 Formal classroom teaching and the sequence of

acquisition of L2 grammatical items

Evidence shows that in general, formal classroom teaching of grammatical structures does not appear to affect the order in which such structures are learned. Fathman (1975a) looked at 260 six to fifteen year olds, from different L1 backgrounds, learning English in the USA. Some were having formal instruction in English and others were not. In a test of the learners' oral production, Fathman found that there was no difference in the order in which they acquired the grammatical morphemes tested. Ellis (1984), looking at 3 children with Punjabi or Portuguese as their L1 studying on an audiolingual ESL programme in the UK, found that the developmental sequences for the structures that he investigated were similar to those reported for natural L2 acquirers. Pienemann (1984) looked at 10 Italian children aged 7-9. They were given two weeks of instruction on Subject-Verb inversion in German. This teaching consisted partly of focus on the actual grammatical rules and partly of communicative practice exercises. At the end of the period of instruction the children's spontaneous speech was analysed to see if they had mastered the inversion rule (stage 4), in the five-stage developmental sequence for German word order rules. It was found that children who had, before the experiment, been able to apply the rules for stage 3, could now successfully apply the stage 4 inversion rules—a transition that usually took months for those acquiring the language naturally. However, children who prior to the experiment had only reached stage 2 in the developmental sequence, were found still to be at that level and thus unable to apply what they had been taught. As a result of this, Pienemann proposes the *learnability hypothesis*—that L2 learners can only benefit from formal classroom teaching if they are 'psycholinguistically ready' for the struc-

tures that are being taught. Thus what is learnable by particular learners at a given stage in their L2 development constrains what is teachable. Explicitly teaching a structure for which the individual is not yet cognitively ready cannot help the individual to 'jump' stages in the developmental sequence. The evidence from Pienemann seems to suggest, however, that the teaching of a structure for which learners are developmentally ready can speed up the rate at which they acquire the structure.

8.2.2 Formal classroom teaching and the rate of acquisition of grammatical structures

While the developmental route taken by learners seems unaffected by formal teaching, evidence exists to suggest that the rate at which grammatical structures are acquired is affected by whether or not learners have been explicitly taught such structures. Long (1983d) looked at 11 studies of L2 learners who had had equal periods of formal L2 teaching, of natural exposure to the L2, or a combination of both. He found that in six of these studies both children and adults showed a faster rate of development in their grammatical knowledge when they had had formal teaching. In two further reports the results were somewhat ambiguous, but suggested that formal teaching did make a difference. In the remainder formal teaching had only very minor or no effect on the rate of development of grammatical knowledge. As we saw in Pienemann (1984) above, the rate of acquisition of grammatical structure did seem to be positively affected by formal teaching, as long as what was taught was at an appropriate level in the learners' developmental sequence. Weslander and Stephany (1983) further confirm Long's conclusion. They looked at 577 children receiving differing quantities of extra ESL in-

struction in Iowa (USA) public schools. They found that those receiving more of such special classroom teaching outperformed those receiving less, especially in the early years of their schooling.

Overall, therefore, the evidence suggests that the rate of acquisition of second language grammatical structures is increased by specific classroom teaching of structure rules. From the variety of studies that have been done this appears to be true regardless of whether the learners are children or adults, beginners or advanced, and of whether they are studying in Acquisition-rich (i.e. L2) or Acquisition-poor (EFL) environments. Furthermore this seems to be true whether the tests that they are given to assess their rate of development are integrative or discrete point tests (for more about tests see Chapter 11).

8.2.3 Formal classroom teaching and the eventual level of L2 proficiency reached

Surprisingly little research has been carried out to try to establish whether learners who have formal classroom teaching in fact reach a higher level of eventual L2 proficiency than those who do not. In one of the rare studies reported, Pavesi (1984) looked at two groups of subjects. Group A were 48 Italian high school students aged 14-18, who had had between 2 and 7 years of grammar-based English language teaching. Of these only 3 had had any informal, out of class exposure to English. Group B were 38 Italians who had worked in Edinburgh (Scotland) for between 3 months and 25 years (average 6 years). None of them had had any formal English teaching, but all had been exposed to English in a variety of home, work and recreation-based situations. These groups were not ideally matched. Members of Group B were considerably older than members of Group A, and, in general, of lower educational and

socio-economic level. These differences suggest that the ultimate level of L2 proficiency in Group B would be lower than in Group A. However, in their favour was the fact that members of Group B had almost all had far more exposure to the L2 than the limited number of classroom hours experienced by Group A.

The way in which Pavesi tried to determine the level of proficiency reached was by looking at how well subjects in each group could orally produce relative clauses of different degrees of grammatical complexity. She found that Group A subjects were able to form accurately relative clauses of more and more complex types than Group B subjects. She concluded that this was not necessarily a direct result of the formal teaching of grammatical structure that Group A received. Instead, she suggested, her results may have reflected the fact that in the course of their classroom learning, Group A subjects were exposed to a wider and more complex range of L2 input, than the Group B subjects were likely to have come across in the natural L2 environment. The English used by the teacher in the class probably contained a wider variety of grammatical forms than are found in natural vernacular speech. Furthermore, classroom teaching constantly stressed the importance of grammatical form. As a result, Pavesi suggested, the Group A subjects were likely, eventually, to have consciously noticed the forms used to organise the work in the classroom. Once the Group A subjects had noticed the forms they could begin to build up and test hypotheses about how the forms worked and in which contexts they were used. This would lead sooner or later to the forms becoming part of their Interlanguage, available for use as needed.

Some additional anecdotal evidence for Pavesi's suggestion is provided by Schmidt and Frota (1986). The quotation below refers to the

learning of Brazilian Portuguese by Schmidt, a trained linguist, who kept detailed notes of his own interlanguage development.

It seems, then, that if [R (=Schmidt)] was to learn and use a particular type of verbal form, it was not enough for it to have been taught and drilled in class. It was also not enough for the form to occur in input, but [R] had to notice the form in input... [R] subjectively felt as he was going through the learning process that conscious awareness of what was present in the input was causal. (Schmidt and Frota 1986:281)


It is impossible to state categorically that formal teaching of the language structure directly results in learners reaching a higher level of L2 proficiency than they would be able to reach merely by natural exposure to the L2. However, the little evidence that exists suggests that the input in the formal teaching environment, where the L2 is used as the medium of instruction, will provide learners with a wider variety of more complex language forms than the natural L2 environment. Since the focus in such a classroom will often be on form, it is likely that learners will to varying degrees and at varying speeds notice the forms in which the input is expressed. If Schmidt and Frota above are correct in their conclusion that it is only when the form has been noticed, that it can begin to be processed and acquired, then, indirectly, formal instruction does provide an environment beneficial to the development of a higher level of L2 proficiency.

8.3 How Does Formal Teaching Affect SLA?

Having seen that formal teaching does have some effect on SLA, we need now to consider how it is able to have this effect. How does Learn-

ing affect Acquisition? Scholars hold very widely differing positions on this question, but they can be broadly divided into two groups; the Non-Interface and the Interface positions.

Figure 10 DIFFERENT ATTITUDES TO THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN FORMAL LEARNING AND ACQUISITION OF SECOND LANGUAGES

(KRASHEN) THE NON-INTERFACE POSITION	(SHARWOOD-SMITH/BIALYSTOLK) THE INTERFACE POSITION
	
LEARNING AND ACQUISITION ARE COMPLETELY SEPARATE PROCESSES. WHAT IS CONSCIOUSLY LEARNED WILL NOT BECOME ACQUIRED	LEARNING AND ACQUISITION ARE COMPLEMENTARY. WHAT IS CONSCIOUSLY LEARNED CAN BECOME ACQUIRED.

8.3.1 The non-interface position (Krashen)

Krashen (1982a) is the most extreme exponent of the Non-Interface position. He believes that Formal Learning of grammatical rules can have no effect whatsoever on a learner's Acquisition of such rules. By Acquisition here we take him to mean the ability to use the rules quickly, fluently, and flexibly to interact in the L2 in whatever contexts the learner encounters. Any Learning that occurs as a result of formal teaching is only usable, he believes, in situations where there is time to check consciously (monitor) L2 output. This is more likely to be the case at the Careful end of the competence continuum, when using written language for example. At the Vernacular end on the other hand, in normal oral interaction, there will be no time to check output, and so only what has

been Acquired, not what has been Learned, will be of use.

Krashen would say it is not surprising that formal teaching has no effect on the developmental sequences outlined above, since these reflect the universal route of true Acquisition. Any advantages offered in the rate of acquisition are only a result of the fact that classroom input is geared to be comprehensible to the learners. Thus in the classroom they are exposed to more comprehensible input all the time. In contrast, especially for beginners, the input obtainable from the natural environment will be a mixture of comprehensible and incomprehensible.

As evidence for his belief that true Acquisition is unaffected by and independent of classroom Learning, Krashen reminds us, advisedly, that there are people who can Acquire an L2 completely without formal teaching. He also cites the greater number of those who Learn the structures of the language in the classroom for many years but are unable to use them. He notes also that via formal teaching even many good L2 learners only master the L2 grammar rules well enough to use them very slowly, and suggests that formal teaching is, therefore, a very inefficient way of developing L2 proficiency in grammar.

Krashen believes that formal teaching of grammatical rules is largely a waste of time. Rather, learners in the classroom should be exposed to as much comprehensible input as possible so that they can acquire the basic rules in the Natural Order outlined above. Such input should be at a level, the '*i + 1*' level that is just slightly above the learners' current Natural Order level. Learners will naturally move from '*i*', their current Natural Order level, to '*i + 1*', the next level, by understanding input containing '*i + 1*'. Then, using these naturally Acquired rules as a basis, learners should be allowed to acquire the remaining rules of the language at their own pace by hypothesis forming and testing. Classroom

input that is comprehensible, interesting and relevant to the learners and which provides them with opportunities to use the language that they know, as and when they wish to do so, for their own communicative purposes will automatically result in Acquisition. The input need not follow any particular grammatical sequence since the route of natural acquisition is fixed.

As mentioned previously, attempts to apply what Krashen advocates have mostly taken place in the USA. Most learners have been immigrants who have had two advantages not present in the majority of world SLA contexts: a very real and pressing need to acquire the L2, and the real possibility of using what they have acquired in their immediate daily lives. In our opinion these advantages, as well as the need for highly motivated, native speaker teachers, able to provide constant relevant comprehensible input, make Krashen's standpoint quite impractical in most SLA situations.

8.3.2 The interface position

The supporters of the Interface position believe that what has been Learned can directly help Acquisition to take place. They believe that new L2 forms can both be acquired directly in ways similar to L1' acquisition, and be initially consciously Learned, before becoming part of the Acquired Interlanguage. The transformation of items from being merely learned to being fully acquired is thought to occur through practice. We will now look at two versions of the Interface position.

Sharwood-Smith (1981) represents the opposite end of the continuum from Krashen.

"Most spontaneous performance is attained by dint of practice. In the course of actually performing in the target language, the learner

gains the necessary control over its structures, such that (s)he can use them quickly and without reflection". (1981:166)

Sharwood-Smith, like Krashen, sees the ultimate goal (Acquisition) as the ability to use language accurately, in real-time (vernacular) interaction as well as in more leisurely careful contexts. He believes, however, that to reach such a point, formal classroom learning of the grammar rules is necessary. He would thus say that Learning precedes and is an essential part of Acquisition. He sees that for adolescent and adult learners especially, the explicit teaching of grammar is a shortcut to accurate, fluent communicative ability. Learners who have had their attention focused directly on grammar and who are provided with plenty of opportunities to practise grammar in meaningful contexts are more likely to fix the grammatical rules firmly in their long-term memories. Once so fixed, the rules are available for use both in fluent, grammatically correct communication, and, where available, for further acquisition of language through such interaction in the L2 environment.

To begin with, input should be mostly grammar based. It should involve the explicit teaching of grammar rules and provide plenty of practice in using such rules, both by mechanical practice drills and by using the learned rules to do things in order to see their relevance to real-life.

Bialystock (1982) takes a position midway between Krashen and Sharwood-Smith. She notes that different learners require different levels of proficiency to differing degrees along the competence continuum. As a result, these different needs should determine the extent to which the input should focus on formal learning, or on providing opportunities for natural acquisition.

She points out that at any point along the competence continuum a

learner's knowledge of any structure rule can vary according to :

How analysed the rule is: i.e. how flexibly the learner can use it.

How automatic the rule is: i.e. how quickly and accurately it can be produced.

Different language tasks require different types of knowledge.

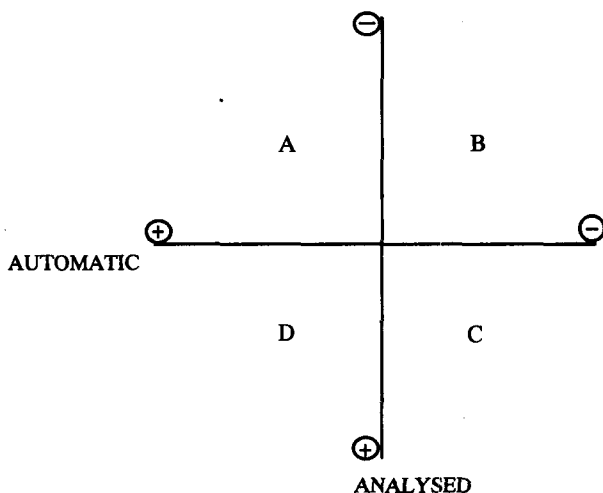


Figure 11 ANALYSED AND AUTOMATIC USE OF LANGUAGE
(BIALYSTOCK1982)

The most difficult language tasks are those requiring knowledge that is both Analysed and Automatic (as in Section C, Figure 11), while the easiest are those needing neither a high level of analysis or automaticity (Section B, Figure 11). Natural acquirers and child learners are likely to have Section B knowledge when they start acquiring the L2, moving to Section A knowledge later. That is to say they are able to use what they

know quite fluently, but are not grammatically very flexible. Pavesi's Italians living in Scotland with their ability to construct only simple types of relative clauses are an example of this type of learner. Those learning the L2 formally in the classroom are likely to begin with section C knowledge and later develop section D. Such learners therefore should ultimately be able to use the language both fluently and flexibly.

When considering what mix of more formal Learning and more natural Acquisition a group of learners require, teachers "*...must consider the specific goals of the learners and attempt to provide the appropriate form of knowledge to achieve those goals*" (Bialystock, 1982: 205). If the goal of the learners is to be able to take part in natural conversation, then they will need to focus on their vernacular style by developing language knowledge that is automatic but not necessarily very analysed. For this type of learner, an immigrant to the USA for example, Krashen-like input that emphasises the need and provides opportunities for communication in the classroom context, may be most suitable. If the learners, however, want to be able to operate in both the careful and the vernacular styles, Chinese English majors for example, then they will need to acquire L2 knowledge that is both automatic and analysed. The best way to do this is, in the initial stages at least, by formal focus on structure in the classroom.

The Interface position seems to us to be more reasonable than Krashen's non-interface position. It not only acknowledges that different learners have different needs, but is also realistically implementable in a wider variety of SLA contexts.

8.3.3 What does the evidence about the effects of formal

learning tell us about the nature of language?

a) For L2 learners to be said to have fully Acquired a particular L2 structure rule, it is necessary for such a rule to be both analysed and automatic. For this to be so, it must be well 'fixed' in their long-term memory. It is likely that different language⁷ learning environments— the L2 environment, the L1 environment with greater or lesser access to native speaker input of various first and second hand kinds, provide learners with different amounts of opportunity to help such 'fixing' take place. Whatever the environment though, it seems that there is a certain universal sequence in which L2 learners of English, whatever their L1, acquire certain simple grammatical morphemes and develop correct interrogative and negation patterns.

b) Whatever the learning environment, formal teaching of grammar rules seems to have no effect on the sequence in which learners acquire the above grammatical morphemes. The rate at which they are acquired seems to be enhanced by specific focus on structure, as long as this focus is pitched at the right learnability level for the learner.

8.3.4 What does the evidence about the effects of formal learning suggest about language learning and teaching?

a) In the majority of cases where the language learning environment is (for English) an EFL one, opportunities for Acquiring language naturally through interaction will be few. Language learning will inevitably be classroom based. As a result, whether the conclusions drawn from Pavesi (1984) are true or not , there seems to be a strong case for using the L2 in the classroom as the medium of instruction. It seems likely that

the more the L2 is used in the classroom for real purposes (to teach, to manage and to chat), the greater the variety of comprehensible L2 input the learners will be exposed to. The more realistic exposure they get to the L2 the better.

b) Within the classroom the amount of time spent formally learning and more or less mechanically practising L2 structures should depend on why the L2 is being learned. In the Chinese context where learners generally have to process (and if foreign language majors, produce) a great deal of written language at the careful end of the competence continuum, formal teaching and controlled practice of the L2 structures is likely to be necessary. This alone, however, will not be sufficient to 'fix' such structures in the long-term memory. It is necessary, from very early on in any L2 learning course, to provide learners with opportunities to practise using the knowledge they have to do things in a variety of receptive and productive contexts.

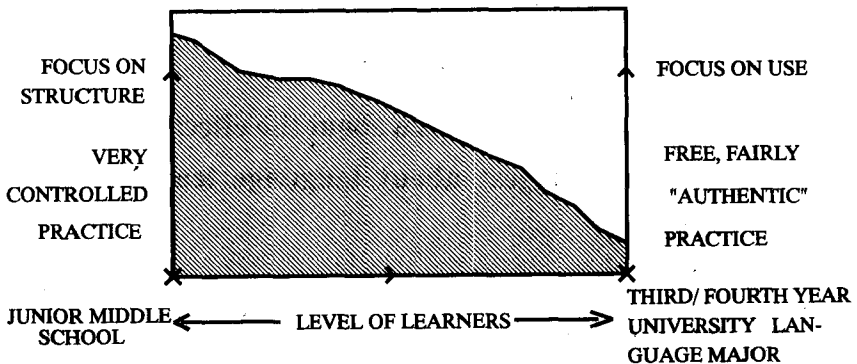


Figure 12 FOCUS ON LANGUAGE STRUCTURE AND FOCUS ON LANGUAGE USE (A POSSIBLE PLAN FOR THE CHINESE LANGUAGE LEARNING CONTEXT)

c) The balance between formal learning and mechanical practice of structures and freer practice to highlight the use of such structures in the real world, is likely to change as the learners' proficiency level rises.

While in the first years of Junior Middle School one might expect the balance of classroom work to be weighted towards the formal study of structure, by the time students are in their last two years at University one might hope to see the greater part of classroom time taken up with activities involving using what learners know. Such activities would be aimed as closely as possible at the type of L2 contexts that students might realistically be expecting to encounter, in the real world once they leave university.

SUMMARY

In this chapter we have said:

1. Some people do seem to be able to Acquire second languages without any formal study of the structure rules. Such people are usually those who are living in the L2 environment and who have an immediate need to know the L2. They are often very fluent communicators at the vernacular end of the competence continuum, but are likely to make grammatical mistakes in more careful contexts. The circumstances which aid the Acquisition of second languages do not exist in China.

2. SLA research suggests that formal teaching of the L2 structure:

a) has no effect on the order in which the grammatical forms outlined in section 8.1 are acquired.

b) does speed up the rate at which these grammatical forms are acquired as long as learners are psycholinguistically 'ready' to acquire

them.

c) may affect the ultimate level of proficiency reached by learners. Teachers who focus on form in the classroom draw learners' attention to the forms of the L2 structures. Once they have consciously noted the forms, learners can begin to develop and test hypotheses using the forms, and so are helped to acquire them.

3. All L2 learners need to Learn (or Acquire) basic L2 structure rules if they are going to be able to use the L2. The degree of depth to which structure rules need to be studied and the extent to which they need to be applied accurately will vary according to the learners' purposes for learning the L2. When designing any L2 language programme, it is necessary to consider why the learners are learning the language, and what balance between the study of structure rules and their practice will best enable the learners to achieve their purposes.

4. The relative weightings given to accuracy (forms of the L2) and fluency (use of the L2) throughout the duration of a language learning programme can change. It seems likely that in the many cases where learners have no particular purpose for learning the L2, programmes might usefully emphasise accuracy to begin with and fluency later on. (see Figure 11 above)

FURTHER READING

- D. Larsen-Freeman and M. Long: *An Introduction to Second Language Acquisition*. Longman. 1991. Chapter 6.
- R. Ellis: *Understanding Second Language Acquisition*. Oxford University Press (OUP). 1985. Chapter 9.

- S. Krashen: *The Input Hypothesis*. Longman. 1985. Chapters 1-3.
- B. Mclaughlin: *Theories of Second Language Learning*. Edward Arnold. 1987. Chapter 2.
- B. Spolsky: *Conditions for Second Language Learning*. Oxford University Press (OUP). 1989. Chapter 12.

9

INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES AMONG LANGUAGE LEARNERS

BEFORE YOU READ THIS CHAPTER, TRY AND ANSWER THE QUESTIONS BELOW.

1. Does the age at which second language (L2) learning begins make any difference to the level of proficiency that it is possible to reach?
 2. Do successful L2 learners have some special mental aptitude for language learning? If they do, what sort of abilities might this aptitude consist of?
 3. How important is motivation for successful L2 learning? What determines whether or not L2 learners are motivated to learn a second language?
 4. What sort of personal characteristics are likely to make a person a more or less successful L2 learner?
 5. Can L2 learners be taught how to learn? If they can, what sort of learning 'strategies' might a successful L2 learner be taught to use?
-

In the last two chapters we have looked at aspects of SLA that are thought to be relevant to learners in general. We will now consider SLA from the point of view of the learners as individuals, with personal strengths and weaknesses. In this chapter we will discuss a variety of ways in which individuals may differ from one another, and the effect of such differences on the way in which, and the speed with which, they learn other languages.

9.1 The Role of Age in SLA

The effect of age on SLA has often been studied. This is partly because age is an easy variable to identify, but also because it is important in the theoretical argument about how SLA occurs. If the evidence shows that children's and adults' SLA processes are exactly the same, then this provides support for Krashen's 'natural' model of SLA. If on the other hand we find that age is a factor affecting the progress made and the ultimate level of proficiency reached in the L2, then it is reasonable to accept that there is more than one possible model of the SLA process. Long-term studies of SLA show that individuals who start learning a second language as children ultimately reach a higher level of L2 proficiency. This is particularly true in terms of pronunciation. It is only those who have begun to learn the L2 at an early age who ever speak with an accent that is indistinguishable from that of native speakers. There is also evidence to suggest that learners who have begun learning the L2 as children reach a higher level of syntactic accuracy in their oral production.

Oyama (1976) looked at 60 Italian immigrants to the USA. They had arrived in the USA between the ages of 6 and 20 and had lived there for between 5 and 18 years. He found that the only ones with a native

speaker accent were those who had arrived before the age of twelve. Length of stay in the USA had no effect. Patkowski (1980) transcribed 5 minute excerpts from the spontaneous speech of 67 immigrants to the USA. The immigrants varied as to the age at which they arrived in the country and had all lived there for at least 5 years. Patkowski gave the written transcripts to two trained native speaker markers and asked them to grade them on a scale from 0 (zero proficiency) to 5 (native speaker proficiency). He found that the transcripts of those who had arrived in the USA at the younger ages were marked highest for grammatical accuracy. Major (1987) looked at whether adult L2 learners of differing levels of proficiency could be taken for native speakers as regards pronunciation. He had as his subjects 53 adult native speakers of Brazilian Portuguese and 7 native speakers of English. Ten native speaker American judges heard 3 short phrases spoken by each of the 60 subjects, and were asked to mark them according to foreignness of their accent. None of the non-native speakers were marked higher than the native speakers and the gap between the two groups was very large. These results all suggest that those who start to learn a L2 as children are more likely, eventually, to reach native speaker levels of pronunciation and grammatical accuracy than those who begin to learn when they are adolescents or adults.

There is evidence, however, to suggest that at the beginning of the SLA process many older learners pass through the early stages of syntactic and morphological development faster than children. This is not surprising since their cognitive and intellectual abilities are more developed than those of child learners, thus enabling them to identify and manipulate structure rules more quickly. Here too though, younger adults and adolescents learn more quickly than older adults, given equal amounts of exposure to the language.

In general, therefore, whenever those who began to learn the L2 at an older age and those who began at a younger age have been compared with one another after several years of L2 study, or several years of living in the L2 environment, those whose L2 studies started early have reached a higher level. Thus whether we consider formal Learning or natural Acquisition, it seems that those who start to learn another language when they are children are at an advantage.

9.1.1 Possible reasons for the effect of age on SLA

Various more or less interconnected reasons have been offered to account for the effect of age on SLA. There is to date no agreement as to which reason (or combination of reasons) is the most influential. The reasons can most conveniently be grouped under three headings. The first group contains reasons that concern the development of the human brain. Lenneberg (1967) in his Critical Period Hypothesis notes that for the first 10 to 12 years of human life, prior to puberty, language acquisition is easy because the brain is still very 'plastic' and flexible. The language function within the brain is not yet lateralised to the left hemisphere. The whole brain can still be involved in language acquisition and so L2 learners at this point are capable of absorbing new language information quickly and easily. Older L2 learners have only the left hemisphere of the brain available for language processing. In addition their brains in general are less flexible. This makes it more difficult for them to absorb new ideas and information. They are thus unable ever to reach the same overall level of L2 proficiency as those who begin to learn the L2 during the Critical Period.

A second set of reasons involves differences resulting from the differing stages of cognitive development reached by child and adult learn-

ers. Child L2 learners, it is suggested, use the LAD to learn the L2 in the same way as they learn the L1. At this stage of cognitive development they relate to all language according to what it can DO, not according to what it IS. Their brains are not ready to begin the formal study of the language system. Adult learners, being cognitively more mature, are able and willing to study consciously the language rules. This difference explains the initially faster development of adults' linguistic competence. Later though, older learners often find it difficult to move on to DO things with the language knowledge they have.

The third group of reasons focuses on social-psychological factors. It suggests that adults are more inhibited than children about using the L2. They are reluctant to practise using what they know. As a result they rarely develop real native speaker levels of pronunciation and fluency. Furthermore, adults, especially if they are immigrants feeling insecure living in the L2 environment, may prefer to retain their L1 group identity by speaking the L2 with an accent that identifies them as a member of a particular L1 immigrant community. Children are far less inhibited about using the language, and it tends to be easier for them (in the L2 environment) to get opportunities to play with native speakers and so have plenty of pronunciation practice. In addition, younger children are likely to obtain better, more carefully expressed, input from adults. They thus get clearer samples of the L2 from which to acquire accurate syntax.

9.1.2 What does the role of age in SLA suggest about the nature of language?

Different aspects of any language become understandable at different levels of cognitive development. The consciousness that language is systematic is greater in adults than in children.

9.1.3 What does the role of age in SLA suggest about language learning and teaching?

a) SLA processes for adults and children are not the same. While young children appear to learn foreign languages in natural ways that are often similar to their Acquisition of their L1, the same is not true for adults. These differences imply that there can be no single universally applicable theory of SLA. Different learning and living contexts lead to different rates and ultimate levels of SLA.

b) The starting age for learners beginning to learn any foreign language should ideally be before the end of the critical period, while the brain still retains its early flexibility. Learners benefit from being sufficiently cognitively mature to cope with some analysis of the language system, while still uninhibited about using what they know. It has been suggested that the age of 8 or 9 is optimal.

c) L2 syllabuses and learning materials need to be sensitive to the age of the learners. The extent to which materials, at beginner level, focus on learning the forms of the language would ideally be greater for adult than for child learners.

9.2 Intelligence and Language Aptitude

9.2.1 Intelligence

The general intelligence of human beings is thought to determine their overall ability to learn new skills. General intelligence is usually abbreviated to 'g'. It has been suggested by some researchers that tests of intelligence can predict success in SLA. Others believe that there is some

separate special mental construct that determines our aptitude for language learning.

Neufeld (1978) and Oller and Perkins (1979) have claimed that no special aptitude for language exists, and that the level of a person's 'g' can predict their eventual L2 proficiency. This complete identification of language aptitude with 'g' has never been fully accepted, since this is not what happens in the L1. In L1 acquisition children of widely differing intelligences become equally proficient native speakers.

Cummins (1979) offered a more sophisticated explanation of the connection between intelligence and L2 proficiency. He identified two separate kinds of language ability that all native speakers of a language may have. The first is called Cognitive and Academic Language Proficiency (CALP). This is the more academic kind of language ability that involves recognising the linguistic forms of the language and how they relate to one another in longer sequences of spoken or written text. Levels of CALP are judged by the extent to which native speakers know the grammar of the language, the breadth of their vocabulary and their ability to use this knowledge precisely and flexibly. Evidence of such CALP ability is typically provided, in academic contexts, by competence in doing tests and exercises, and by the proficiency with which individuals are able to produce longer written assignments or dissertations. Cummins suggests that proficiency at this type of language use is affected by a person's 'g', and native speakers have this ability to differing extents in their L1. The second sort of language ability that Cummins identified, is termed Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS). These skills determine oral fluency and the ability to use language appropriately to communicate. All normal native speakers have this ability and it is unaffected by an individual's 'g'.

An experiment, Genesee and Ekstrand (1976), predates Cummins but provides some support for his ideas. They looked at native and non-native speakers' language proficiency and compared it with their scores on intelligence tests. They found that 'g' correlated strongly with native speaker's proficiency in reading, grammar and vocabulary, but not with their oral proficiency. For non-native speakers, 'g' correlated with performance in tests of reading comprehension, dictation and free writing, but not with their oral ability or listening comprehension. It seems from this experiment that tests of general intelligence may be able to predict eventual L2 proficiency in CALP-like areas of language, but not in those requiring BICS ability.

9.2.2 Language aptitude

General intelligence alone is not, therefore, a reliable predictor of eventual levels of overall language proficiency. It has been suggested that there is another innate ability, that some of the people have, or have to a greater extent, than others, which makes them likely to be more successful L2 learners. This ability is known as Language Aptitude.

The two best known tests that have been devised, and which claim to be able to identify the components of language aptitude and measure them, were both written in North America in the 1960s. They both reflect the structural view of language that was current at the time. They are J.B. Carroll's *Modern Languages Aptitude Test (MLAT)* and Pimsleur's *Language Aptitude Battery (LAB)*. Both consist of a series of subtests that can, it is still claimed by some, measure a person's overall aptitude for language learning.

The MLAT views aptitude as consisting of four independent abili-

ties testable by 5 subtests. These abilities are:

Phonetic coding ability—the ability to identify distinct sounds, to form associations between sounds and the symbols that represent them and to retain these associations.

Grammatical sensitivity—the ability to recognise the grammatical function of words and phrases in sentences.

Rote learning ability—the ability to learn the associations between sounds and meanings quickly and efficiently and to retain them.

Inductive learning ability—the ability to work out the rules governing a set of language materials, given samples of the materials that allow such deductions to be made.

The LAB has three components of aptitude, tested by six subtests. The components are:

Auditory ability — similar to Phonetic coding ability above

Verbal intelligence — similar to Inductive Learning ability above
Motivation

Examples of how some of these are tested are given below:

Phonetic coding ability: Learners listen to a tape on which they are taught an artificial numbering system using nonsense syllables. They are then asked to write down the arabic numeral equivalents of 3 digit numbers in the artificial system. These are spoken at a fairly rapid pace on the tape. 15 items in 14 minutes. (MLAT)

Grammatical sensitivity: *He spoke VERY well of you.*

Which word in the following sentence does the same as

VERY in the above sentence?

Suddenly the music became quite loud. (MLAT)

1 2 3 4

Verbal Intelligence: The learner is given a number of forms in a foreign language (Karbardian), and their English equivalents. From these he must work out how other things are said in the language.

shi gader le = the horse sees father

shi gader la = the horse saw father

be = carries

How would you say 'the horse carried father'?

15 items in 12 minutes(LAB)

We can see that what is being mostly tested here is learners' aptitude at identifying and retaining the formal sound and structure rules of a language, not their ability to use language. The evidence that exists regarding the ability of such tests to predict future language learning aptitude shows that they do predict the rate of formal learning of the L2, for learners studying the language in a traditional way with the focus on the form of the language. They also predict success at learning the L2, as long as such success is measured by tests of linguistic knowledge; once again they predict CALP abilities but not BICS.

Because of this one-sidedness these tests have tended to be used less and less as ideas of what language proficiency involves have expanded to include the learner's ability to use the language forms that he knows. So far, no attempt has been made to devise an aptitude test that does try to predict success at using a foreign language.

One interesting experiment done using these tests is reported by Wesche (1981). Subjects' scores on the subtests of both the MLAT and

the LAB were used, together with interviews, to assign different subjects to three different classes learning English. These classes were taught using different methodologies. The first group who had very normal scores on each part of the aptitude tests were put in a class taught by the Audiovisual method. This method, similar to the Audiolingual method, involves memorising dialogues which are accompanied by slides and then doing oral drills based on what has been memorised. The next group consisted of learners who had scored particularly high on the Grammatical sensitivity part of the test. They were taught by an Analytic Method. Here explicit grammatical explanations were given before any exercises were done and all learning was meaningfully contextualised. The last group were those who had scored highly on the Phonetic coding and memorisation parts of the test. They learned using a Functional-Situational method, in which all language was organised according to the situation in which it was being used and not systematically graded for structural complexity. The emphasis was on using the language in interpersonal situations. By the end of the experiment, all learners were apparently pleased with the type of teaching that they had received and there was no significant difference in the eventual levels of proficiency reached by the Audiovisual and the Analytic groups. It is not clear what happened to the Functional-Situational group. This experiment suggests that aptitude tests might have a, so far unexploited, role as a means of identifying students with similar strengths and weaknesses, who can then learn together using a methodology that takes account of their needs. No other reports of the tests being used in similar ways have yet been reported.

9.2.3 What does language aptitude research suggest about the nature of language?

Humans may possess two independent language abilities which focus on opposite ends of the competence continuum. All normally intelligent human beings develop BICS proficiency in their L1. This relates to the, mostly spoken, language of human interaction used at the vernacular end of the continuum. There is far more variation in the level to which L1 CALP ability is developed. This is the ability to operate in the formal, accurate, often written, language characteristic of the Careful end of the continuum. It might be possible to predict the level of people's CALP ability through tests of general intelligence.

9.2.4 What does language aptitude research suggest about language learning and teaching?

a) Concepts of what constitutes language proficiency change over time. They are often not reflected in the tests that claim to measure such proficiency. The above aptitude tests predict, and many current language tests continue to measure, mostly the ability to recognise correct grammatical forms and vocabulary items, not the ability to use what is known. Since the success or failure of most classroom language teaching is measured by learners' success in language tests, tests that measure only language knowledge can have a very negative effect on what goes on in the classroom. It is now increasingly accepted that language proficiency involves both knowledge of a language and how to use that knowledge in a natural and appropriate way to do things with the language. The sooner language tests begin to reflect contemporary understandings of proficiency, the more likely language classrooms are to follow suit (see Chap-

ter 11).

b) The extent to which a particular group of learners will need L2 training in CALP and BICS type abilities will vary according to their purposes for learning. For example, most Chinese Middle School students at the moment require only CALP in English to pass the MET test. Groups of learners training to be hotel waiters and waitresses, would on the other hand require mostly BICS in the L2. Those training to represent China abroad in a diplomatic or business capacity would probably require aspects of both. Any syllabus and materials proposed for a particular type of learner will need to reflect the learners' differing needs for different kinds of language.

9.3 Motivation and Attitude

9.3.1 Motivation

A huge amount of research has been carried out to try and identify what factors are most influential in determining L2 learner motivation. The most important variable seems to be what incentive the learners have to be successful; how they answer the questions 'if I succeed what do I gain?' and 'if I fail what do I lose'?

"If most students had to know a given foreign language in order to accomplish some goal for themselves, then most would learn it".

(Cooper, 1981:133)

Stevick (1971) introduces the concept of any L2 learning course needing to have the 'strength' to carry its own 'weight' by means of the rewards that it provides for success. The effort of learning the L2 should

be made worthwhile for the learners, by what they eventually achieve as a result of having learned successfully.

He suggests that any L2 learning course can provide five types of reward to encourage learner motivation and success:

At syllabus-level the course will only have the 'strength' to carry its own 'weight' if it:

- i) is relevant — the content of the syllabus is seen by the learners to be relevant to their reasons for learning the L2.
- ii) is complete— includes all the language necessary for the learners to achieve their goals in the L2.
- iii) is authentic—the materials used are, and can be seen to be, linguistically and culturally authentic.

At lesson level to have 'strength' the learners need to feel that what is taught is:

- iv) satisfying—so that they leave the classroom each time feeling that they have benefitted from being there.
- v) useful—so that they can leave the classroom and use what they have learned immediately.

In an EFL context, it is unlikely that a language learning course will practically be able to provide all the above types of reward. In an ESL context this will be more feasible. In any L2 learning situation we should try to bear (i), (ii) and (iv) in mind.

In order for potentially motivating factors of a L2 learning course actually to motivate, the learners do of course need to be learning the L2 for some potentially motivating purpose. They need to have a goal for their learning. Lambert, in a series of experiments carried out over 30 years between the 1950s and the 1980s, has identified two main types of

positive motivation that learners may have for learning a L2.

The first is commonly called Instrumental Motivation. This is most typical of foreign rather than second language learning contexts. Instrumentally motivated learners are, usually, learning the L2, mostly within their own L1 community, for some business, government or academic related purpose. It is likely that the result of being able to use the L2 within the L1 context will confer prestige, status and financial benefits. People learning for instrumental purposes therefore have some specific, personal, identifiable reason for learning the L2. They have clear goals, whose achievement require them to learn the L2. Successful learning of the L2 will benefit them directly within their own society.

The other type is known as Integrative Motivation. This is more common when learning the L2 in the L2 environment. The learner with this kind of motivation is held to be learning the language to become more like, or more accepted as, a member of the L2 speech community. Here then the motivation for learning the language is based on the desire to fit in, to become less obviously an outsider.

In China today the main motivation for learning the majority of foreign languages is clearly instrumental. Learners hope to benefit personally, in terms of their later career in China, from their knowledge of the foreign language. The motivation for learning some languages, especially American English, may also have an integrative aspect for some Chinese learners who identify very strongly with an often idealised picture of the L2 culture.

9.3.2 Attitude

Underlying and supporting (or undermining) motivation are a whole range of attitudes to learning, to the L2 culture and to its speakers.

Adult and adolescent learner motivation seems, certainly in ESL contexts, to be most strongly affected by attitude to native speakers of the L2. The learners' own attitudes may be influenced by those of their parents, their peers and their teachers. If learners have positive attitudes to L2 native speakers, this does appear to increase their motivation and thus also the success of the SLA. It appears that attitudes can change over time. Hermann (1980) studied 750 German child and adolescent learners of English. She found that those who had been studying for 5 years or more had a more positive attitude to the L2 culture than those who were just beginning. She also noted that the more proficient the learner, the more positive the attitude. This was not because such a positive attitude had necessarily always been there and helped cause the proficiency. Instead it seems that success in the language bred a positive attitude, which in turn made further success likely.

"... the mere satisfaction the learner derives from his achievement of the learning task may influence his attitude to the ethnolinguistic group in question and even result in a change of such attitude."

(Hermann , 1980:249)

Young children do not generally have attitudes about language, and are unlikely to have developed strong attitudes to the speakers of any L2. As we saw above, they are likely to learn the language of wherever they happen to be.

"A child suddenly transported from Toronto to Berlin will learn German no matter what he thinks of Germans."

(Macnamara, 1973:37)

9.3.3 What does attitude and motivation research suggest about the nature of language?

Purpose is a crucial ingredient of all language use. Learning of any L2 is unlikely to be successful if the learners themselves have no visible purpose. The more tangible the benefits that the learner will have access to through learning the language, the more likely they are to be motivated to learn it successfully.

9.3.4 What does attitude and motivation research suggest about language learning and teaching?

a) Any language teaching that hopes to motivate learners must first identify, and then be responsive to, their purposes for learning the language. The more the learners feel that they are gaining from learning the language, the more motivated they are likely to be, and vice versa. Identifying what it is that learners hope to gain from their SLA is essential. Syllabuses and materials should then be designed with that in mind. The ultimate aim of any L2 learning course should be to make learners feel that if they do not study, they will have missed something that would have been of value to them.

b) If it is true that success in language learning encourages positive attitudes towards the L2 culture and towards the language learning process itself, then the more learners can be made to feel that they are successful in their learning (by demonstrating that they are drawing closer to achieving their goals), the more likely they are to feel motivated to continue to try and develop their proficiency.

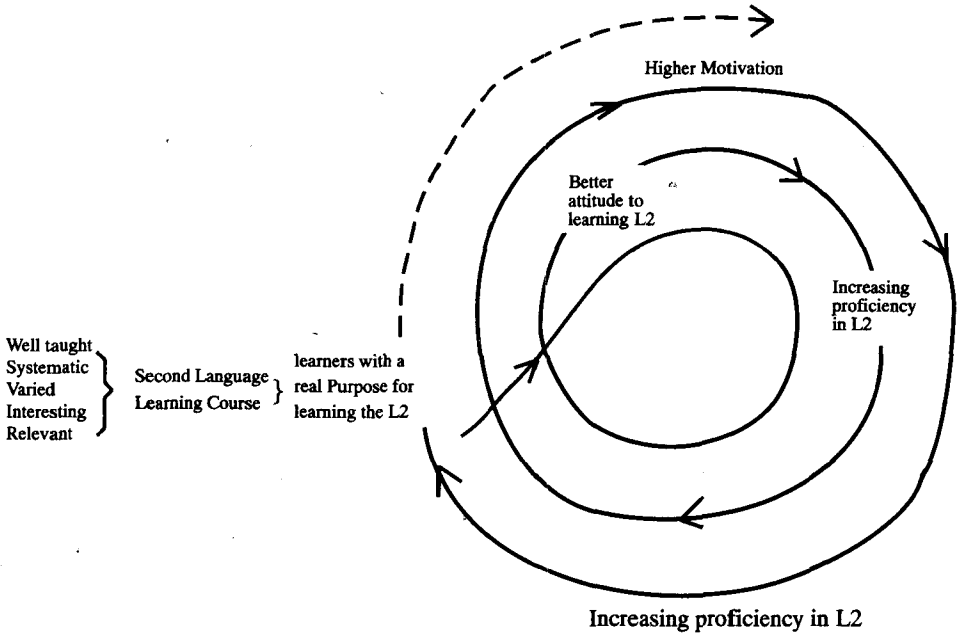


Figure 13 THE MOTIVATION SPIRAL

9.4 Personality Factors

9.4.1 Sensitivity to the group dynamic in the classroom

Any class of learners is set of individuals who may react differently from one another to the teacher, the materials and to other learners. Thus it is common to find situations where some learners like a particular teacher more than others, or where a class that is very cooperative with one teacher, behaves very differently with another. Some learners may react better to a teacher who is very formal and controlling and to a text-

book where each unit is laid out in exactly the same way, while others may prefer a teacher who is relaxed and informal and who uses varied materials that are much less predictable. Where the learners, the materials and the teacher are complementary, the group dynamic in the classroom is likely to be good. The opposite also holds true.

In most L2 learning classrooms the teacher and the learners have not chosen each other or the materials that they have to use. They have to accommodate. However, an important part of the teacher's job is to try to generate as positive a group dynamic as possible in the classroom. Such a positive atmosphere can potentially benefit the learners in three ways:

i) All learners, even the shy ones, will be more willing to try to use what they know, without worrying about looking silly or making mistakes.

ii) Learners, even if not personally interacting at a given moment, will be more likely to take notice of and learn from what their classmates say and do and from the feedback they receive from the teacher.

iii) Learners will cooperate in the classroom organisation necessary for the less controlled interactional type of activities. These may involve moving learners and/or classroom furniture. If learners are cooperative, this is very easy; if not it can be very noisy, time consuming and disruptive.

9.4.1.1 What does the need for a good group dynamic suggest about the nature of language?

Most human beings are more inclined to use a L2 freely and to the limits of their ability if they feel relaxed and comfortable with the environment they are in. Conversely, if they feel nervous and suspicious, they are unlikely to make the most of interactional opportunities.

9.4.1.2 What does the need for a good group dynamic suggest about language learning and teaching?

Teacher training courses should stress the need for teachers to develop a good L2 classroom atmosphere so that learners will not feel intimidated at the prospect of using the language, and, even when not using it themselves, will be interested in what their classmates have to say. In such a classroom it will also be easier to accustom the learners to the organisation necessary for less controlled classroom activities.

9.4.2 Introversion-Extroversion

Traditionally, it has often been assumed that learners who are extroverts will be better and faster L2 learners. Extroverts are generally more sociable and gregarious. They enjoy change and excitement. As such, it is thought that extroverts will be more willing to use the L2 in the class and, in ESL contexts outside it, to ask and answer questions, without worrying too much about whether they make mistakes or look foolish. Especially if they are learning in the L2 environment and their language proficiency both in and outside the classroom is developing by what Krashen would regard as a natural acquisition. Extroverts will be more actively involved with the language than their introvert classmates. They will be more responsive to the input they get, be keener to try producing their own L2 utterances and so have more opportunity to build up and test hypotheses about the language structure. The result should be that their overall proficiency should develop more quickly and to a higher level than that of their less active, because less extrovert, classmates.

In an EFL environment where the classroom focus is more on the structure of the language, one might expect the extroverts to continue to take the opportunities that are offered to use the language, and thus de-

velop their fluency. The more introverted, bookish, reserved learners, in this context, might however, through being willing to spend more time studying and practising the forms of the language, develop a fuller and more accurate understanding of the language structure, than the extroverts.

Data from experiments are unclear. A problem is that different researchers use different measures not only to identify introverts and extroverts, but also to measure language proficiency. Overall, the relationship between language proficiency and extroversion appears to be true when assessing proficiency at using the language, but not when assessing knowledge of the language.

9.4.2.1 What does the effect of Intro/Extroversion on SLA suggest about the nature of language?

Fluency and accuracy in a language do not necessarily lead to one another. Some personality types are likely naturally to gravitate towards fluency, others towards accuracy.

9.4.2.2 What does the effect of Intro/Extroversion on SLA suggest about language learning and teaching?

Depending on the learners' needs:

a) More introvert learners are likely to need a supportive and unthreatening classroom environment, so that they are willing and able to take what they find to be 'difficult risks' and try to use the L2. Teachers need to be aware of who the introverts and extroverts in the class are, and prevent the latter from doing all the talking.

b) More naturally extrovert students may need to be reminded that comprehensible (but structurally more or less inaccurate) fluency is not sufficient for every context in which they will need to use the language.

Accuracy will need to be emphasised.

9.4.3 Cognitive style

Cognitive Style refers to the ways that individuals organise, analyse and recall new information and experiences. A distinction is made between Field Dependent and Field Independent language learners. Field Dependence is measured by asking learners to look at complex patterns and identify a number of simple geometric figures that are hidden within them. The aim is to see whether they are able to break up what they see into its parts and keep these parts separate from the whole. It is felt to be valid for L2 learners because they too have to be able to isolate L2 items from the context in which they appear in order to be able to comprehend them. When looking at a page of text for example, they have to be able to identify the words, phrases and sentences and understand how the parts fit together to form the whole.

The characteristics of field dependent language learners are that they accept the L2 information exactly as it is presented to them by the teacher. They do not try to analyse or think about it themselves. They are very reliant on what other people think of them and depend a great deal on positive feedback in their L2 learning. They tend to be seen as outgoing and interested in others and so would be expected to develop good interpersonal communication skills in the L2.

Field independent learners on the other hand, do not assume that the L2 information that they are given is necessarily correct. They tend to analyse it and think about it themselves to determine whether it is correct or not. They have a strong sense of personal identity and often seem insensitive to and distant from other people. They might, therefore, be expected to be less interested in developing communication skills in

the L2.

Hansen and Stansfield (1981) conducted an experiment based on the following hypotheses:

That field dependent learners would be more successful at the communicative use of the L2.

That field independent learners would know more about the structure of the L2.

Their subjects were 293 beginner learners of Spanish at American Universities. They found that, contrary to their expectations, field independent learners were more successful than field dependent, both in their knowledge of the language and in using it to communicate. Other experiments testing mainly knowledge of the language have also shown field independent learners to be more successful.

Hansen and Stansfield's experiment was the only experiment that tried to relate field dependence to tests of communicative performance as well as linguistic knowledge. Although they found that field independent subjects performed better all round, correlations with communicative performance were lower than with the more traditional measures of language proficiency. Perhaps, therefore, what we see here is similar to what we have seen with aptitude tests: a situation where conclusions are drawn about overall language proficiency (i.e. knowledge of the language and ability to use that knowledge), while using testing instruments that test only partial proficiency (knowledge of the Language).

Field independence is typical of learners who think about the input that they get. In a formal learning context they are more likely to consciously think about and analyse the structure items that are presented to them, and consider how they fit into the grammar system as a whole. In a natural acquisition context they may more actively process the input they

receive to build up hypotheses about how the language works. In either case they would develop a broader and deeper understanding of the structure of the language than those who take all L2 input at face value. Hence their better performance on structure tests. The low, though significant, correlation with communicative performance on one experiment, is insufficient to prove that field independence will generally result in a higher level of overall proficiency.

9.4.4 Empathy and Inhibition

Empathy refers to people's willingness and ability to identify with others. It is thought, (Guiora 1972), to be relevant to L2 learning, because learning an L2 involves taking on a new identity. The biggest step in taking on this new identity is, according to Guiora, learning to pronounce the L2 in a more or less native speaker way. He suggests that this is a very major step, because for all of us, as adolescents and adults, how we speak and pronounce our L1 is an essential feature of our identity. Thus in China, for example, speaking with a Hunan or Beijing accent is an essential part of a person's identity as a Hunanese or Beijinger. When learners pronounce the L2 in a more or less L2 way, they temporarily lose their L1 identity and take on that of another person— they empathise.

The ease with which learners are able to empathise depends on the flexibility of their ego boundaries. Some people are more flexible and less inhibited than others and they find it easier to accommodate two identities, the L1 and the L2.

Various experiments have been carried out to try to measure the level of learner empathy and match it with ability at pronouncing the L2. The results are very mixed, but Guiora (1972) found that where inhibi-

tions were lowered by giving his subjects a small amount of alcohol, then ego boundaries became more flexible and subjects performed better on pronunciation tests.

No definite connection between empathy and L2 performance has been established. It does, however, seem likely that learners who are naturally open, flexible, and adaptable and who are sensitive to and interested in other people, are more likely to feel comfortable using the L2 (taking on the L2 identity) than learners with very fixed and inflexible personalities.

9.4.5 Learner Strategies

Learner Strategies are defined by Rubin as "the techniques or devices that the language learner may use to gain knowledge" (1975:43). She suggests that learners who consciously adopt learner strategies can help themselves in their SLA. 'Good language learners', according to Rubin in her 1975 study, will be those who, whenever possible, do the following:

- i) respond to the group dynamic (atmosphere) of the classroom situation so as not to develop inhibitions and anxiety.
- ii) use all opportunities to use the L2.
- iii) make use of opportunities to practise listening to and responding to speech in the L2 that is addressed to them or to others—focusing on meaning not on form.
- iv) supplement learning from direct contact with L2 native speakers, by also learning from formal study of form.
- v) are adult or adolescent rather than children, during the early stages of learning grammar.
- vi) have enough analytical skills to perceive, categorise and store

- L2 linguistic features and use them to monitor output.
- vii) have strong reasons for learning the L2.
 - viii) are ready to take risks with the language, even if it makes them seem foolish.
 - ix) are able to adapt to different learning conditions.

Later work by, among others, Rubin (1981) and O'Malley (1985) has identified two different kinds of learner strategies. These are:

Rubin (1981) O'Malley(1985)

- a) Actions that permit learning Cognitive strategies
(For example— repetition, translation and note taking)
- b) Actions that contribute to learning Metacognitive strategies
(For example—understanding what conditions one learns best in and making sure they exist.
— correcting one's own speech for accuracy and appropriacy
— arranging rewards for oneself when a language learning activity has been completed successfully.)

O'Malley also noted that the type of strategies that were used changed over time. Beginners tended to use more of the simpler Cognitive strategies, while intermediate learners used the more sophisticated Metacognitive type.

If, as asserted, the use of such strategies does seem to help learners develop their L2 proficiency, then the question of whether they are teachable arises. O'Malley (1985b) gave 75 High School ESL learners instruction on the use of certain learning strategies. He then gave them a listening and a speaking task to perform, to see whether the group who had been given the instruction performed better than another group who had

not. He found that the listening task was too difficult for his subjects and thus they were unable effectively to use any strategies. On the speaking task however, he found that the group who had been taught learning strategies did perform better than the group who had not.

This experiment would seem to suggest that such strategies can be taught. It is necessary to remember though that learning strategies that are unfamiliar to the learners are likely to take a long time to become an integral part of their way of learning the L2. Also, some groups of learners have strategies that are very deeply ingrained and will be difficult to change. O'Malley (1987) for example, found that Asian learners were much more reluctant than Hispanic learners to give up their rote memorisation learning strategies.

9.4.5.1 What does the evidence about Learner Strategies suggest about language learning and teaching?

a) Learners from different cultural backgrounds are likely to have different concepts of what constitutes a 'Good Language Learner'. It seems sensible, when teaching, to identify and utilise the strategies that different groups of learners already use. For example, rote learning is a strategy that Chinese students, due to their learning tradition, naturally feel comfortable with and are good at. Teachers thus need to consider how it can be utilised. We shall take the learning of vocabulary as an example. As long as teachers ensure that the vocabulary the students are asked to learn is useful, can be appropriately contextualised and is frequently recycled, the Chinese learners' rote learning strengths ought to mean that they are capable of developing their knowledge of L2 vocabulary fairly quickly.

b) Teachers should let learners know about the learning strategies

that are appropriate to their learning context and that do not conflict radically with their learning tradition. They should try to ensure that the classroom environment is one which encourages the use of positive strategies. For example, if we consider the features of a 'Good Language Learner' (listed at 9.4.5 above) in the Chinese context:

Items (i), (ii) and (viii) all relate to the need for a supportive classroom atmosphere in which learners will feel able to 'take risks' and utilise opportunities to use the L2.

This implies good learner: learner and learner: teacher relations which are desirable in any cultural context if learning is to be successful.

Items (iii) and (iv) note that a good learner is one who is able to focus his mind sometimes on the meaning of the L2 and at other times on how meaning is grammatically expressed. This implies a classroom where the emphasis is sometimes on the study of structure and at others on the meanings that structure expresses. Again such a classroom is not peculiar to any cultural background.

9.4.6 Personality factors: conclusion

A problem with most research into the effect of personality factors on SLA is that such factors have been very crudely measured by allocating individuals to groups who share a particular characteristic. Thus we have individuals lumped together as extrovert or introvert, field dependent or independent and so on. Consequently, it is not surprising that the results of so many experiments are unclear, and that any conclusions drawn can only be viewed as tendencies, not absolutes.

In the last resort it is the teachers' responsibility to try and get to

know their learners as individuals. On the basis of this understanding of the learners, teachers will be able to develop the kind of classroom atmosphere and motivating input that will enable students of all personality types to benefit as much as possible from their learning.

SUMMARY

In this chapter we have said:

1. The age at which L2 learning begins often affects the ultimate level of proficiency reached. It is unusual for those beginning to learn any L2 as adolescents or adults ever to reach native speaker's levels of proficiency. This is especially true of L2 pronunciation.

2. It is not clear whether there is a special mental capacity independent of general intelligence, language aptitude, that can accurately predict whether or not a person will be a successful language learner. Tests of language aptitude that are currently available, are unsatisfactory in that both the aptitude tests themselves and the language tests against which they are judged test knowledge of the language, not ability to use the knowledge. They test only the CALP-like part of people's language ability which may be predictable from tests of general intelligence.

3. Motivation is crucial to successful L2 learning. Factors that determine whether or not L2 learners are likely to be well motivated include:

- whether or not the topics and language covered in the language course are clearly relevant to their purposes for learning the language.
- whether or not they can expect to gain personal benefits of some

kind from successfully completing the language course.

— whether or not they feel that they are making real progress in their L2 proficiency.

4. There is little clear evidence about the type of personality that is most likely to be a successful language learner. In very general terms it seems that if the aim is to produce learners able to use the language fluently at the vernacular end of the competence continuum, then extrovert, flexible learners who are uninhibited and able to empathise easily may be more successful. If the aim is to produce those able to use the language accurately, but not necessarily fluently, then the more careful introvert, field independent learners will perhaps perform better. It should, however, be stressed that not enough is known for certain about the relationships between personality traits and successful L2 learning for such relationships to be used as the basis for decisions that may seriously affect people's future lives.

5. It has been suggested that language learners who use certain strategies perform better than those who do not. It logically follows, if this is so, that such strategies should be taught to L2 learners. The evidence suggests that strategies may be taught and that they do improve L2 performance. However, learners from different cultural backgrounds are likely to find different strategies easy to use. Teachers cannot, therefore, expect to teach the same strategies to all L2 learners. Teachers need to be sensitive to the strategies favoured by learners from different cultural backgrounds and consider ways of utilising these to improve their learners' learning techniques.

FURTHER READING

Larsen-Freeman and Long: *An Introduction to Second Language Acqui-*

- sition*. Longman, 1991. Chapter 6.
- P. Skehan: *Individual Differences in Second Language Learning*. Edward Arnold. 1989. Chapters 3,4,6.
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- W. Littlewood: *Foreign and Second Language Learning*. Cambridge University Press (CUP). 1984. Chapters 5,8.
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10

SLA RESEARCH: WHAT WE NEED TO CONSIDER

In this chapter we try to summarise what SLA research suggests about the factors that seem to play a part in making second language (L2) Learning so different from first language (L1) Acquisition, and about the effect that individual differences may have on successful L2 learning. Bearing the research in mind, we will also consider how realistically teachers may make the most of the context in which they find themselves.

10.1 First Language Acquisition and Second Language Learning

As we have seen, all normal humans by the age of 5 or 6 reach more or less native speaker's levels of grammatical competence with no formal instruction whatsoever. L2 learners, after hundreds of hours of

formal instruction, rarely reach the same level of proficiency. Below we will look at some of the reasons that are thought to account for this difference.

10.1.1 Different input and different opportunities for output

L1 acquirers

The child **DOES** real things with language right from the start.

The input to the child involves real communication and demands responses.

The input and output are based around relevant, immediate topics.

The explicit language focus is on using language appropriately.

Equal participation in interaction between children and parents or peers.

L2 learners

The learners do **unreal** things with language in the class.

The input to the learners involves unreal questions and answers.

The input and output are based (usually) on a textbook.

The explicit focus is on the structure rules of the language.

Teacher dominates most class interaction. Learners get few opportunities to use language.

It seems that children acquiring a first language benefit from using the L1 for real communication of their immediate wants, needs and interests, from a very early age. It is impossible to make second language classroom a completely realistic L1 type learning environment, where the learners are mostly using language to **DO** things that are important to them. Teachers can, however, try and find out what sort of materials

would be interesting and relevant to the needs of their learners, and try to supply at least some of such materials as input to the language class. In addition, they can try to ensure that the L2 learning activities that they ask learners to perform, are sufficiently varied to ensure that sometimes it is the learners and not the teacher who do most of the talking in the L2 classroom. Teachers and learners can also try to use the L2 for all the real communication that does need to take place in the classroom. This includes the management and organisation of the learning process (for example, giving instructions, explanations and feedback) and the social interaction that normally occurs among learners and between learners and their teacher (greetings, comments on daily life, the weather, holidays).

10.1.2 Different learning environments

Clearly children at home with their mothers and L2 learners in the language learning classroom are in very dissimilar environments. Some of the principal differences are outlined below:

L1 acquirers	L2 learners
Almost always in L1 environment.	Rarely in L2 environment.
In very supportive, caring, often 1:1 learning situation.	Very rarely in 1:1 situation.
Interacting in encouraging, interested context with little pressure or competition.	Often in competitive, exam-oriented, status marked, pressurized learning context.
Little anxiety about L1 performance.	Potentially high anxiety about L2 performance

There are many facts about the different learning environments that cannot be changed. The difference in 'teacher-learner' ratio between L1 and L2 learning contexts cannot be altered. It is a fact that L2 learners will hardly ever have as much individual attention as L1 acquiring children. Similarly, since in many contexts success in learning the L2 has important effects on a learner's future life, L2 learners will often be under more pressure to 'achieve' in a quantifiable way, than children ever are when acquiring their L1. Teachers can, however, try to make the classroom atmosphere as encouraging, supportive and unthreatening as possible. They can, for at least some of the time, encourage learners not to worry about exam marks; to cooperate rather than compete, to try using the language even if they feel unconfident, in the knowledge that they will not be mocked or criticised for making mistakes. In this way it will be more likely that shyer learners, as well as the more self-assured, will feel confident enough to respond to input by producing their own L2 output. Teachers can try and compensate for the lack of a L2 environment by making use of any sources of native speaker input that are available, be they human, audio-visual or in print. The classroom will never be ideal, but it is all that is available to most learners. It is upto both teachers and learners to make the most of it.

10.1.3 Formal learning or natural acquisition of language structure

If children, with their innate knowledge of linguistic universals, can creatively construct the structures of their L1 through using the language in their normal day to day lives, is the same true for older L2 learners? Can they, through hypothesis forming and testing, utilise the input that

they get in the classroom to work out the structure rules of the L2, even if such input is not structurally graded? Is this only possible in the L2 environment where they are able to test out hypotheses via interactions in the real world? Is explicitly teaching them the forms of the L2 and giving them mechanical practice at using those forms, a sensible thing to do? Should this be the major or minor part of any L2 learning course, should the proportions vary according to learners' L2 level, or should it be omitted altogether?

The answers to all these questions depend very largely on two factors. Firstly, to what extent is it believed that the development of learners' Interlanguage benefits from the opportunity to test out hypotheses about the structure of the L2 that have been formed in the classroom? Can any part of the L2 that has been formally learned only become acquired through use? Secondly it depends on an assessment of the learners' needs. What level of accuracy and fluency do they need to reach in the language? What range of contexts will they be required to be able to use the language in? Are they learning the L2 principally to use it in careful or vernacular contexts? The proportion of total course time to be spent on formal learning will, therefore, vary according to what the learners are likely to be DOING with the L2 after their course is completed.

It seems likely that the majority of adult and adolescent L2 learners earning outside the L2 environment will need specific teaching of the L2 structure rules. Such teaching is likely to become less necessary as the learners' level rises and the main language structures have, through earlier focus on form and more or less controlled practice, become available for use; fully acquired.

10.1.4 Different ages of the learners

We have seen in Chapter 9 that the age at which a learner begins to learn any L2 seems to affect both his eventual level and the way in which he learns.

L1 and L2 children	L2 adolescents and adults
Unconscious of learning or acquiring language. Just interested in whether their use of L1/L2 does what it is supposed to do.	Conscious of formal learning process and want to be told how the rules work.
No formal practice of grammar rules. Emphasis on fluency.	Practice rules to get them right. Emphasis on accuracy.
Unself-conscious about using language.	More self-conscious about error, pronunciation and sounding foolish.
Likely eventually to reach native speaker's levels of accuracy and fluency.	Very rarely reach native speaker's levels of accuracy and fluency.

It is, in general, unrealistic for language learning courses for adults and adolescents to take native speaker's levels of proficiency as their eventual aim. Such an aim is usually unachievable.

Any L2 learning syllabus needs to take the age of the learners into account, when considering the balance between courses that emphasise the formal learning of grammar rules and those that emphasise opportunities for using what is known. Most L2 learners are adolescents or

adults. It seems that such older learners are more aware of language structure. They often prefer to spend time at the beginning of the course having the structure rules explicitly presented and formally practised, before being expected actually to use the language. Where L2 learning begins at primary level, it would seem sensible for the initial emphasis to be on the development of oral fluency and pronunciation. This is partly because, at this age, children are still very natural about using language, and partly because their cognitive maturity has not yet reached a level where they are able to deal efficiently with an analysis of the L2 structure rules.

10.2 Individual Differences between Learners

10.2.1 Group dynamic and classroom atmosphere

A positive group dynamic in the L2 classroom will benefit both the teacher and the learners in a number of ways:

- i) It will largely determine the success of the less controlled, 'USE' part of any L2 learning course. It will mean that learners are cooperative as regards the organising and carrying out of freer, learner-centred activities. They will take the opportunity to practise what they know, seriously.
- ii) It will ensure that both introvert and extrovert learners are more likely to feel confident enough to participate fully in the class.
- iii) It will make it easier and more attractive for the learners to develop empathy for their new L2 identity.
- iv) It will mean that field independent learners, who need the chance

to question or analyse the input that they get, will feel able to do so. The teacher will have enough self-confidence to welcome learners' questions about aspects of the language that seem unclear or inconsistent. He will be able to admit that he does not know or that he was wrong, and will be willing to learn from the learners as well as expecting them to learn from him.

10.2.2 Aptitude

If, as suggested, individuals all have two types of language ability in their L1, CALP and BICS, then any L2 learning syllabus needs to consider whether the learners for whom it is designed, need CALP training or BICS training or a mixture of both.

Aptitude tests that are currently available focus on predicting CALP rather than BICS abilities. As a result, such tests are unlikely to be able accurately to predict eventual performance, for any learner whose main purpose for learning the L2 is to be able to use it for natural, fluent, oral interaction. Basing decisions on who should and who should not be allowed to study a L2 only on such tests, is not valid for any learners who will eventually be expected to produce as well as understand the language.

10.2.3 Motivation and attitude

L2 learning contexts which involve Teaching English (or any other foreign language) for No Obvious Reason (TENOR) are very common throughout the world. Learners in such contexts, therefore, have to be motivated by the intrinsic strength of the course itself. The course must be made interesting and enjoyable in itself, so that learners' attitudes will be sufficiently positive to motivate them to want to learn, even though

there may be no clearly defined personal benefit to be gained from doing so.

A wide range of attitudes may contribute to developing a learner's motivation. Personal, parental or peer group attitudes to the L2 and to native speakers of the L2, how difficult learning the L2 is thought to be and how much anxiety it induces in the learner, how successful the learner is, are some that are thought to affect motivation.

For learners who do not have clearly defined instrumental or integrative motivations for learning the L2, the encouragement of positive attitudes is particularly important. For a TENOR course to have the strength to do this, it is necessary, since the course cannot be planned around learners' actual needs, to ensure that at least part of the input relates to their real interests. For this to be so, time will have to be spent establishing a sufficiently good group dynamic for the learners to be willing to contribute honestly to the decisions made about the topics around which input and output should be based.

10.2.4 Individual differences: conclusion

If individual differences among learners are going to be taken seriously, then, at the planning stage of any L2 learning course, there are a number of questions that need to be asked and answered before the course syllabus and materials are finalised.

WHO are the students? Middle school students /University. non-English majors /engineers /hotel workers/people about to go and live in the L2 environment?

WHAT are their characteristics? Ages / educational background /

previous experience with the L2/interests?

WHAT do they need to learn? Accurate control of the language structure to what level /ability to speak fluently — in what contexts and to what degree of correctness?

HOW can we provide what they need?

What proportion of course time should be spent on formal learning to emphasise correctness? What proportion on fluency based activities and tasks?

What should the attitude to error be?

What teaching techniques will be most appropriate?

What materials and facilities are available?

Of course, in reality, most L2 teaching situations do not give the teacher the opportunity to become involved at the syllabus design stage. The answers to many of the above questions have already been decided long before the teacher meets the learners in the classroom. In practice, therefore, classroom teachers have to make do with the learners and materials available, and have to aim their teaching at enabling learners to pass the prescribed examinations. Even with all these constraints, teachers who do know their learners and make some effort to utilise what they know about them to make their L2 learning interesting and enjoyable are likely to have a course with more strength than teachers who do not. This is likely to be reflected in examination results as well as in the classroom atmosphere.

11

TESTING BOTH KNOWLEDGE AND USE OF THE SECOND LANGUAGE

In Chapter 9 we saw that tests of language aptitude test only knowledge of the form of the language. We noted there that this is also the case with many other current tests of L2 achievement or proficiency. The previous chapters strongly suggest that language is one of the most important tools used by humans to communicate with each other, to express and understand meanings and intentions. Research evidence further shows that the sounds, letters, words, sentences of any language, while essential as carriers of meaning in context, have little intrinsic de-contextualised meaning. Since this is so, our definition of what it is to know a language must involve both knowing the forms of the language and how to use them in context to communicate and understand meanings. Tests that claim to show how well a learner knows a language, but that test only recognition of the correct forms of the language, in reality test only part of the learners' L2 knowledge. In this chapter we first look, briefly, at the principles of language testing. We then demonstrate ways of testing grammar, vocabulary, and the skills, which require learners to

show that they can use (as well as recognise) the L2.

11.1 The Two Main Types of Language Test

The two most commonly used types of language tests are Achievement and Proficiency tests. Achievement tests are based on a particular language syllabus, part of a syllabus, or chapters in a textbook that learners are known to have studied. They are tests of how well learners know what they have been taught. The Chinese MET test taken by students leaving Senior Middle School and Mid-Term tests for University English Majors are examples of large-scale and small-scale achievement tests, respectively. The former is based on the Middle School English syllabus while the latter may be based on just a few chapters from a textbook.

Proficiency tests do not claim to be based on any particular syllabus or textbook. They aim to show the overall level of a learner's language ability at a given moment. They are often given to see whether or not a learner's language ability is sufficient to be able to perform a particular task, or work in a specific role, using the L2. Examples of such tests are the Chinese English Proficiency Test (EPT), the American Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) and the British International English Language Testing Service (IELTS) test, all of which, although different, aim to show whether a learner has sufficient ability in English to be able to study successfully in an English speaking country.

11.2 Principles of Language Testing

11.2.1 Validity

All tests should be VALID. The validity of a test relates to what the

test claims to measure and how well it does so. If we know that a test is valid then we know what we can confidently say about a person who passes or fails it. The two most important aspects of validity are Content and Construct validity.

If a test has Content validity it means that the test questions cover a fair sample of the language structures and skills that the test claims to be measuring. For a Mid-Term achievement test to have content validity, it would need to cover, in roughly the right proportions, the language structures and skills that the learners had been taught in the previous half term. For an overall proficiency test it would be necessary for the questions to test both a representative sample of language structures from the language as a whole, and the learners' ability in each of the four skills. Content validity is very important in language tests because some things in language are much easier to test than others and so tend to be tested much more often. A clear example of this is the fact that until very recently, even in tests of overall proficiency, Speaking, Writing and Listening ability have rarely been tested. In order to be able to see whether a test does have Content validity the Test writers ought to specify clearly what areas of language their test claims to cover. In practice this is rarely done.

A test has Construct Validity if it can show that it measures only what it claims to measure and nothing else. For example, a test that tests learners' spoken L2 proficiency by asking them to use spoken language in a variety of ways, can claim to have construct validity as a test of spoken proficiency. A test that consists only of multiple-choice questions covering the L2 structure and reading comprehension, does not have construct validity as a test of spoken L2 proficiency. In order for a test to maximise its construct validity it should test whatever it claims to test

as directly as possible. By "directly" we mean that if we want to test each of the four skills, we should test them by actually asking the students to read, write, speak and listen to the L2 in a number of different contexts. Any language test should also ensure that it is a test of the L2, not a test of creative thinking, overall intelligence or range of previous experiences. In a test of writing, therefore, items like those below would not be suitable:

- a) Beginning with the sentences that follow, write a composition of at least 250 words.

"Why did you bring that with you?" said Peter. "It'll only slow you down".

- b) Write a report, not a story on: *How you would mend a broken window.*

Item (a) tests learners' imagination and creativity just as much as it tests their ability to write in the L2. Item (b) is unfair because those learners who have experience of mending a window will find the task much easier than those who have none. Once again then it is not merely a test of the L2.

11.2.2 Reliability

There are two aspects to RELIABILITY, Test and Scorer Reliability. Test Reliability refers to how consistent scores on a test are. If, for example, there are two versions of a particular test and the same person takes them on consecutive days and scores almost the same on each version, then such a test has Test Reliability. A test has Scorer Reliability if there is a high level of agreement between different people marking the same test paper.

There are several straightforward ways of trying to ensure Test Re-

liability. The first is to try and ensure that the test takes as many different independent samples of the learners' performance as possible. This means that there should be as many questions as is practical, and that these questions should be as varied as possible so that the learner has a chance to show what he can do in a range of different L2 contexts. Tests of language skills should, therefore, consist of several different independent items. A listening test, for instance, might expect the learners to deal with both conversation and monologue and with speakers who use more than one accent, and demand that learners react to what they hear in a variety of different ways. For example they might be asked to listen to a telephone conversation and follow directions on a map, take notes from a brief lecture and listen to a discussion in order to identify one out of a group of pictures.

Secondly, and very obviously, learners should not be expected to deal with types of test item that they are unfamiliar with and all instructions should be clear and specific so that everybody is doing the same thing. If question types are unfamiliar or instructions are unclear, learners' scores are likely to be artificially lowered and so less reliable.

Thirdly, all questions and tasks need to be as closely defined as possible so that all learners understand each question in the same way and thus answer it in the same way, so that when it is marked the scorer is truly comparing like with like. Four possible items for a test of writing are given below:

- a) Discuss tourism.
- b) Discuss tourism in China.
- c) Discuss how to promote tourism in China.
- d) Discuss how the following might help promote tourism in China:
Building more low-priced hotels.

Improving transport.

Better training for those working in the tourist industry.

The last item (d) is most likely to ensure that all learners write about the same things. This will mean that their ability to do so can be more reliably compared.

Scorer reliability is clearly also very important for any test. One result of this has been to write test items that require no judgement at all from individual scorers. Such items in language tests have usually been Multiple Choice Questions (MCQs), which, since they can be scored objectively by either humans or machines, have become very popular. They are, however, limited in the type of language ability that they can test and so bring the validity of tests into question. Test items for validly testing learners' ability to use the language can be difficult or impossible to construct in the MCQ format and so, as the interest in tests of language use has increased, so has the proportion of test questions that have to be scored subjectively. Subjective scoring of course creates problems for scorer reliability. Some of these problems and what can be done to minimise them will be discussed in sections 11.6.2 and 11.7.3 below.

11.2.3 Practicality

There is no point in teachers starting to try to design valid and reliable language tests without first considering the practical realities of their own specific L2 learning context. There are four main practical questions to be considered by test writers thinking about a new test. First, will the new test be cheap and easy to construct? Test item writing can be very time-consuming in terms of teacher hours and it can also be costly to print test papers and make recordings. Secondly, will the test

be economical to administer? Different tests may mean teachers need training in their administration. The tests may require more or fewer classrooms and teachers. The tests may take a longer or shorter time to complete. Next test writers need to consider whether the test will be easy and economical to score. Teachers may need training in new marking techniques and extra payment for doing the marking. Somebody may need to make Chief Examiner to organise training for scorers and to decide on scores where individual scorers disagree. Finally, no new test is likely to be very useful if its results are difficult to interpret. It is, therefore, also important to consider whether the test will show clearly what it is that those who pass and fail it can or cannot actually do in the L2. These various practical aspects of language testing do not point consistently to any particular type of test. Neither does the need for validity and reliability. If we look at the table below we see that neither a traditional MCQ only test, nor a direct skills-based test is free of problems.

	Traditional MCQ tests of grammar, vocabulary, reading and listening. (Objective scoring)	Direct tests of, especially, writing and speaking. (Subjective scoring)
Easy to write	✓	X
Easy to administer	X	✓
Easy to score	X	✓
Easy to interpret	✓	X
High validity	✓	X
High reliability	✓	✓

Traditional MCQ language tests are usually considered to be reli-

able but not necessarily valid. They are also very difficult to write well, and to interpret. More direct tests of the language skills (sometimes called Communicative Tests) are generally regarded as valid but may lack reliability. While relatively easy to write and interpret, they are often time-consuming to administer and to score.

If these three main principles of test design are in such conflict, what type of tests ought teachers to be aiming to give their learners? On the one hand, if tests are to be valid, they need to test use of the L2 as well as knowledge of its structure. On the other, in aiming for validity, tests of speaking and writing, at least, will need to be subjectively marked, thus lowering scorer reliability. Despite this seeming contradiction, (objective, reliable but invalid tests, or subjective, valid but less reliable tests), we believe strongly that we need to test skills as well as structure. We feel that this is desirable for a further, very important, reason in addition to those mentioned above.

Most L2 learning in the world is done to pass some kind of language test. Tests therefore strongly affect what actually occurs in the classroom. This effect of tests on classroom L2 teaching and learning is known as the Backwash Effect. If language tests only test knowledge of grammar and vocabulary, then this is what teachers and learners will concentrate on in the classroom. Conversely if tests demand that learners show that they can use the language, classroom time will have to be found to practice such use of the language. If we feel that it is desirable that L2 learners should be able to use their L2, the quickest way of ensuring that both teachers and learners begin to take skills learning seriously is to incorporate skills testing into language tests.

In the sections that follow we will look at some ways in which grammar, vocabulary, reading and listening can be tested objectively

outside the MCQ format. We will discuss some of the things learners can be asked to show that they can DO in the L2. We will then look at ways of testing written and spoken language and how teachers can try to minimise the subjectivity of scoring for such tests.

11.3 Testing the Language Structure

This is an aspect of language that can be tested using MCQ. However, such test items usually test only the learners' ability to recognise correct grammatical forms, not their ability to produce them. In this section we will introduce several types of objectively markable grammar items that test production.

11.3.1 Completion / modified cloze items

Questions of this type ask the learners to complete the gaps in texts with the correct grammatical structure. They require sufficient context if they are to be objectively markable. For example:

I go to class every day, but I _____ to the library for weeks.

The answer that is expected is *haven't been*. In fact many other possibilities could also be grammatically and semantically correct:

*may not go won't go shan't go can't go am not going
haven't gone haven't been able to go ...* and several others.

If the items are contextualised further, the possible range of answers narrows considerably.

*I go to class every day, but I _____ to the library since
I returned from the summer vacation two months ago.*

All the items in the top line of possible answers above are now impossible. This still leaves at least three possible answers, but these can

be anticipated and markers can be told to allow any of them.

If one wishes to confine possible answers even further, then even greater amounts of context are necessary.

It (1) often helpful (2) try answering the sorts of questions (3) you may (4) asked to do (5) an exam. (6) is not, however, enough just (7) look at (8) past paper (9) answer the questions in (10) head. This will (11) you a clear idea what you (12) capable of.

In this modified Cloze text all the items have only one grammatically and semantically correct answer, except perhaps the eighth which has two (a/the).

If one wishes to make such texts a little more challenging one may leave it up to the learners to identify where in the text words have been omitted and to supply the missing items. For example:

<i>It often helpful to try answering</i>	<u>is</u>
<i>the sorts questions that you</i>	<u>of</u>
<i>may be asked do in an exam.</i>	<u>to</u>
<i>It is not enough just look at</i>	<u>to</u>
<i>past paper and answer the questions</i>	<u>a/the</u>
<i>in head. This will not give you</i>	<u>your</u>
<i>a clear idea of you are capable of.</i>	<u>what</u>

In such types of text test writers usually delete only one item in every line and as a result the texts are generally longer.

This sort of modified Cloze can be aimed at testing both wider and narrower areas of grammatical ability. It can, for example, be limited to testing articles or prepositions, or be expanded to test a wider range of items.

11.3.2 Paraphrase and transformation items

These question types can be written to cover a wide range of grammatical structures. In order to restrict the number of possible answers it is necessary to give the first part of the paraphrase. For example:

- a) *It was difficult to see in the thick fog.*
Seeing _____.
- b) *George is a lot taller than Paul.*
Paul is not _____.
- c) *Susan is very good at table tennis.*
Susan plays _____.
- d) *Couldn't you find a cheaper bicycle?*
Is this _____?
- e) *Elizabeth started teaching fifteen years ago.*
Elizabeth has _____.
- f) *My wife knitted this jumper.*
This jumper _____.

The advantage of these types of questions is that learners have to show that they can produce (as well as recognise) correct grammatical structures. In order to ensure objectivity of marking it is also important to be clear about what is being tested at each question and to provide the scorers with an answer key. Marks should be awarded for successful answers to the grammatical structures being tested and should not be subtracted for grammatical mistakes that are not connected with the test item. The policy on spelling mistakes must also be decided before the marking begins.

A mixture of MCQs and the types of question outlined above will

give a more fully rounded picture of what the learner actually knows, than a grammar test consisting purely of MCQ recognition items.

11.4 Testing Vocabulary

As has been discussed in Chapter 2, before teaching and testing vocabulary it is necessary to decide what vocabulary learners should be able to use actively and which items they are only expected to understand passively. Vocabulary too is very often tested exclusively by using MCQs recognition questions. Below we consider some other possibilities.

11.4.1 Large scale matching items

In this type of test item, testees are usually provided with a large number of vocabulary items and an equal number of sentences with one word omitted. They have to fill each gap with an appropriate vocabulary item. For example:

unreliable, prefer, bachelor, take, moustache, leisure, bulge, intelligent, sincere, complexion, miss, absorb, etc.

1. *Is his skin dark? No, he has a fair*_____.
 2. *She's not stupid, she's quite*_____.
- etc.....

There are three problems that arise with items of this type. Firstly the lack of context may make more than one answer semantically possible. Secondly, if the number of vocabulary items is the same as the number of sentences, the task becomes progressively easier as each indi-

vidual item is completed. Finally, if the learner knows which part of speech the missing item must be, he can ignore all words that are grammatically inappropriate.

Ways of dealing with these problems are demonstrated by the item below:

INSTRUCTIONS

From the list of words given choose the one which is most suitable for each gap. Write the letter of the correct word **ONLY** in each gap on your answer sheet. Use each word once only.

- A. usefully B. respectfully C. carelessly D. correctly
E. rapidly F. furiously G. completely H. sadly

'Be sure to write (1)____.' the teacher shouted (2)____. 'You only have three more minutes and must get used to working (3)____.'
'Excuse me,' a student said (4)____. 'I've finished.' 'No, you have not, you haven't (5)___ finished until you've written your name and the date at the bottom of the page,' the teacher replied. Meanwhile another student was (6)___ finishing his essay on 'My Classroom'.

In this type of test item the context is extended, all the missing vocabulary is the same part of speech and there are several more words given than there are gaps in the text. The focus on identifying which words will be most appropriate in the context provided can, therefore, be maintained to the very end.

11.4.2 Text substitution of vocabulary items

Another possible way of testing knowledge of vocabulary is to base

the vocabulary section of the test on a reading text that has not been used for reading comprehension. At the beginning of the text learners are given a list of words and/or phrases and are asked to find words with exactly the same meaning in the text. The great advantage of this form of test item is that the text itself provides a very detailed context and so the test writer does not have to try and create an artificial one as was done at 11.4.1 above. In the example below the correct answers are underlined.

INSTRUCTIONS

Next to the words and phrases below write words which they could replace in the text, without changing the meaning.

- 1) *apart from* _____
 - 2) *equalled* _____
 - 3) *border* _____
 - 4) *were enough* _____
 - 5) *willing* _____
- etc.....

The simplest trade mechanisms sufficed (4), and among themselves the Boers generated few problems they could not solve by what amounted to the decisions of tribal elders. No government consequently could offer the Boers anything they wanted except (1) armed help against the natives and this they were not prepared (5) to provide. Since they wanted nothing from the government, the Boers saw no reason to support it by paying taxes or rendering services, and the demands of the government were easily evaded on the frontier (3). The situation led to a brand of individualism rarely

matched (2) by other pioneering folk.

This type of vocabulary question can be made more or less difficult by the choice of text upon which it is based and the kind of vocabulary items chosen to be substituted. It is in our opinion one of the best ways of testing for a real understanding, rather than mere memorisation of vocabulary.

11.5 Testing Reading and Listening

Before one can decide how to test a learner's reading or listening ability it is necessary to define what a proficient reader or listener should be able to do. Several attempts have been made to identify the 'subskills' involved in reading and one of these, adapted from a list drawn up by the Associated Examining Board in Britain, is outlined below.

1. Deducing the meaning and use of unfamiliar vocabulary items through understanding word formation and contextual clues.
2. Understanding relations within the sentence.
3. Understanding relations between parts of the text through cohesive devices, especially grammatical cohesion e.g. reference (his, her, this, the latter, there, etc.).
4. Understanding relationships between parts of the text by recognising markers that show that ideas are being introduced, developed, and concluded.
5. Understanding explicitly stated ideas and information.
6. Understanding the function of sentences with and without explicit markers (definitions, examples, generalisations, classifica-

- tions, etc.).
7. Understanding conceptual meaning (comparison, means, results, etc.).
 8. Understanding ideas and information in a text not explicitly stated.
 9. Separating essential from non-essential information. Being able to identify what is the main idea and what is supporting detail (differentiating the whole from its parts, fact from opinion, etc.).
 10. Skimming to obtain the gist and scanning for specific information.
 11. Reference skills (using an index, contents page, etc.).

For listening the range of skills that it might be desirable to test includes listening to a variety of dialogues and monologues of different lengths, dealing with different topics and with speakers who use a variety of standard accents, in order to (from simpler to more complicated):

1. distinguish between specific phonemes, e.g. /l/ vs /r/;
2. find specific information;
3. find the main ideas;
4. follow directions or instructions;
5. identify attitudes and opinions;
6. recognise the function of structures, e.g. statement as a request or order in '*your coat is on the floor*'.

It is unlikely that many tests will test all these sub-skills thoroughly, but test writers do need to be aware that they exist, and that tests should cover a fair selection of the subskills that are considered most important

for learners. The above provides a useful checklist to refer to when writing tests, to ensure that a range of skills are in fact being tested.

Once again MCQs will not be considered. Although these will continue to play a part in the testing of these two skills, they suffer from two great disadvantages. Firstly, MCQs that cover a reasonable spread of different reading and listening skills are very difficult to write well. As a result many such questions are badly written with more than one correct answer, no correct answer or an answer that can be deduced without actually reading/listening to the text. Secondly, the learner must read a lot, just to be able to answer the questions. Sometimes in reading comprehension tests, the MCQ involve almost as much reading as the text itself.

Below we look at other ways in which L2 reading and listening can be objectively tested. They all belong to information transfer tasks.

11.5.1 Matching and labelling tasks

For Reading or Listening:

INSTRUCTIONS:

Read the text 'Haibei Island'. As you read, write in the names of the places numbered 1 to 6 on the map below and draw a line between the two places that will be connected by the new road.

Haibei Island: Reading Text

Haibei Island is situated in the Bay of Korea, 50 miles east of Dalian in Liaoning province in North East China. It was until the 1980s a rather backward area, but since being declared a Special Economic Zone in 1987, development has been very rapid.

The island is fortunate in having two major rivers, the Jade and the Pearl. The waters of both have been harnessed to provide

hydroelectricity which is at present sufficient to supply the island's entire energy needs. The former flows from north to south entering the sea in the southeast of the island near the city of Jichang, while the latter flows through lightly populated but fertile country to enter the sea on the north coast.

Jichang, the largest city on the island, is connected by rail to two of the other main population centres, Yanzhou and Dingshan. At present Yiling, a smaller town famous for its seafood, can only be reached by ferry. The boats leave twice weekly from Yanzhou for the seven hour journey. A road between the two towns is at present under construction. This will, when completed in 1994, cut the travelling time between the two towns to two hours and fully open Yiling to the outside world.

Teachers' Notes for Listening

Haibei Island—off Liaoning coast—NE China—backward until 1980s—1987 Special Economic zone—rapid development—2 main rivers Jade + Pearl—provide enough hydro power for all energy needs—Jade enters sea SE near Jichang—largest city—spelt J I C H A N G—Pearl flows into sea N. coast—Transport underdeveloped—Railway Jichang to Yanzhou + Dingshan—Yanzhou Y A N Z H O U—Dingshan D I N G S H A N—Yiling Y I L I N G, seafood centre, ferry from Yanzhou. Road completed 1994 Yanzhou to Yiling—cut travelling time.

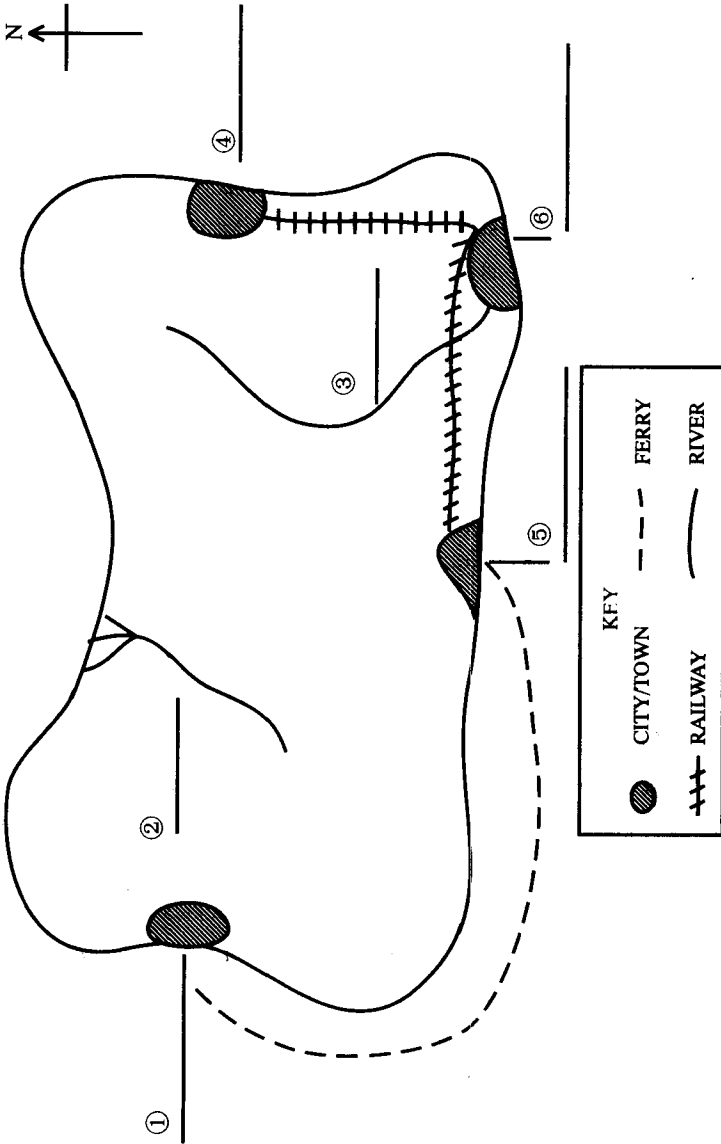


Figure 14 HAIBEI ISLAND

11.5.2 Rearranging/ordering items

These are particularly suitable for any texts in which sequence is important. Examples are narrative texts and those which describe processes, recipes or instructions of some kind. Learners are given the text and a list of the main events or stages which it describes, in the wrong order. Learners read or listen to the text and rearrange the events or stages into the same order as they are presented in the text. For example:

Reading Text

There are two main sources of sugar, sugar cane and sugar beet. Sugar cane stalks are cut when they are about 3 to 4 feet long and are washed and crushed between heavy rollers to extract the juice. The liquid that is pressed out of the cane contains impurities and so chemicals such as milk of lime are added. The mixture is heated to boiling point and allowed to settle. The clean juice is separated from the remaining matter and evaporated into a thick syrup which is then evaporated again into a substance called massecuite. This is then rolled in revolving cylinders.

The cylinders are perforated and the remaining syrup (molasses) is forced out of the holes leaving the raw sugar inside. This is sent to refineries to be processed for consumption.

Sugar beets are brought from the fields to the factories and washed. They are weighed, cut into slices and put into a series of tall boilers where the beet juice is washed out of the slices with hot water. The juice is purified by adding caustic lime and carbon dioxide to the liquid and then filtering it. The clean juice remaining is evaporated into a syrup and then is prepared for the market in the same way as sugar cane.

Teachers' Notes for Listening

2 sources sugar—beet and cane—cane cut when 3 to 4ft high—washed—crushed heavy rollers—extract juice—juice impure—chemicals added—mixture heated to boiling—left to settle—clean juice separated from rest—evaporated—thick syrup—evaporated massecuite—rolled in cylinders—cylinders holes—rest of juice out of holes—raw sugar inside—sent to refineries—cleaned and filtered—pure white sugar—sold. Etc.

INSTRUCTIONS

Look at the stages of the sugar-making process listed below. Write the letter of each stage in the order in which it happens, next to the numbers under Sugar Cane and Sugar Beet. For example if you think (a) in the list is the first stage in making sugar from Sugar Cane, write (a) next to number 1 under Sugar Cane. (The answers are given.)

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| a) <i>chemicals are added</i> | b) <i>the juice is extracted</i> |
| c) <i>the mixture is heated</i> | d) <i>the raw sugar is processed</i> |
| e) <i>it is cut</i> | f) <i>the juice is evaporated</i> |
| g) <i>it is sliced</i> | h) <i>it is crushed</i> |
| i) <i>the juice is washed out</i> | j) <i>it is washed</i> |

Sugar Cane

1. e
2. j
3. h
4. b
5. a
6. c

Sugar Beet

1. j
2. g
3. i
4. a
5. f
6. d

7. f

8. d

11.5.3 Completion items

Many different text types can be used in this type of item. When designing questions it is important to ensure that the writing load on the reader or listener is not too great and that there is only one possible correct answer. For example:

May 27th

Dear Jean,

I am sorry that I did not meet you as arranged last night. I hope that you did not wait too long.

The trouble was that I needed the manager's signature on a document that had to be posted urgently to a client in Hongkong. Of course the manager was in a meeting and the meeting went on and on. By the time I had his signature, it was already 5pm, leaving me just half an hour to get to the museum to meet you. I tried to find a taxi, but you know what it is like in the rush hour, so I had to catch a bus. The result was I arrived an hour late, at 6.30! The museum was closed and, not surprisingly, there was no sign of you. I went to a pub and tried to ring you but no answer.

Sorry again. Please give me a ring soon.

Yours,

Mark.

1. Mark had arranged to meet Jean at a _____.
2. He had to wait for the _____ to sign some-

thing.

3. He couldn't leave work until the _____ ended.
4. He travelled across town by _____.
5. He had arranged to meet Jean at _____ pm on May _____.
6. Mark's purpose for writing this letter is to _____.

The listening script could take the form of Mark telephoning Jean to apologise for not meeting her.

Jean, listen. I'm really sorry about last night. We should have arranged to meet later and not at the museum. It's so far from the office. The problem was the boss. I had this letter that had to be posted but that needed his signature. He of course was in a meeting and couldn't be disturbed. So I had to wait. The meeting went on forever, so by the time I left the office I was already late. I rushed around looking for a taxi, but no luck; it was rush hour of course, so I hopped on a bus. By the time that bus had crawled across town it was 6:30 and I was an hour late. I'm glad you didn't wait...

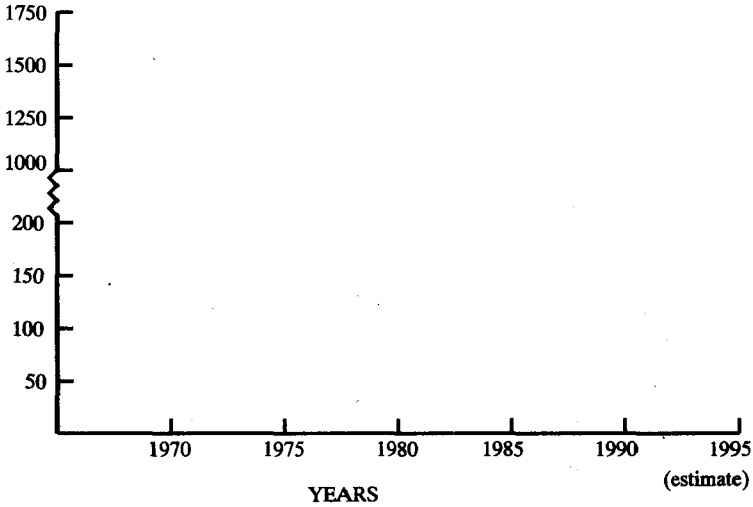
Other types of completion items can involve the filling in of graphs or tables. The text below could be used for either.

INSTRUCTIONS

Read/listen to the text and complete the graph/table with appropriate information from the text.

The number of overseas visitors to China has increased enormously over the past two decades. While Overseas Chinese visitors still

WESTERN TOURISTS VISITING CHINA (Thousands)



WESTERN TOURISTS VISITING CHINA SINCE 1970

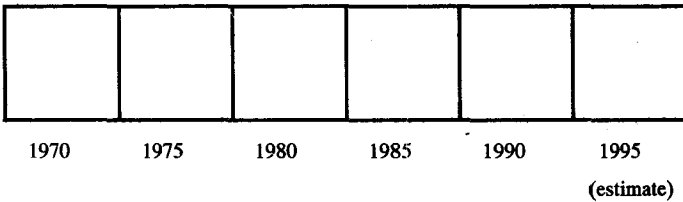


Figure 15

account for the great majority of tourists, the number coming from Western Europe and North America has also grown steadily, both in absolute numbers and as a proportion of the total. At the end of the 1960s the number of unofficial western visitors was so low that

no reliable figures were kept. In 1970, the first year for which figures are available, western tourists to China numbered only 15,000. There was a steady increase in the 1970s with the number doubling by 1975 and reaching 120,000 in 1980. The period of most spectacular growth was yet to come, as numbers increased 10 fold between 1980 and 1985. Tourist numbers declined a little in the second half of the 1980s, due to a number of factors. These included overpricing and less than satisfactory service at some places along the established 'tourist trails'. As a result the 1985 figure had fallen by a quarter of a million by 1990. With ever wider areas of China being opened to tourism and with an increased understanding of what it is that western tourists want, it is expected that western tourists will number at least one and a half million by 1995.

11.5.4 True /false/information not given (Don't know) items

True/False questions are commonly used. Here we wish to show how they can be used with different text types. One disadvantage of such questions is that with only two alternatives the possibility of guessing correctly is 50%. A way of lessening this possibility is to provide a third possible answer at each question— 'Information not given in the text' or 'The text does not tell us'.

The disadvantages are more than outweighed by the advantages. These are:

- i) The questions are very quick and easy to write.
- ii) Almost all texts of differing types and levels are suitable.
- iii) It is possible to generate many questions from a short text.
- iv) Each statement is only one sentence long and so does not add

too much to the reading that the testees have to do.

Both texts below are from the China Daily and could be used as tests of Reading or Reading and Listening.

(News extract) **SKYSCRAPER ON FIRE**

NEW YORK—Fire broke out in one of the twin towers of the World Trade Centre—New York city's tallest building at 110 storeys—at the end of Tuesday evening's rush hour. A spokesman for the city's fire department said an electrical box on the 94th floor of one World Trade Centre erupted in flames. There were no reports of injuries and fire-fighters evacuated the 93rd, 94th and 95th floors.

Write T (True) F (False) or N (Not told in the text) next to each statement below.

1. *The World Trade Centre is the highest building in the world.*
2. *The fire occurred about 7 pm.*
3. *The whole building was affected.*
4. *There were many casualties.*
5. *The fire was not started deliberately.*

(Advertisement)

MARCO POLO CARPETS SALE FOR CHRISTMAS

- *With the most favourable price*
- *Top quality carpets and favourable prices*
- *Richest assortment of carpets including wool and silk rugs.*
- *Good service*
- *Certificate of origin provided*

Time: Nov. 15—Dec. 25, 1991

Business Hours: 9:00am—8:00pm

*Address: China World Trade Centre, shopping arcade
Marco Polo Carpet Shop
Beijing Tourism Shopping Centre in Beijing
Exhibition Hall*

- 1. Carpets can be delivered to your home.*
- 2. The prices are the lowest in Beijing.*
- 3. The Christmas sale goes on for more than a month.*
- 4. A wide variety of carpets and rugs are available.*
- 5. The carpets can only be bought at the China World Trade Centre.*

11.5.5 Following instructions

Items of this kind are especially suitable for listening and can be done in the Language Laboratory. They can also test testees' ability to follow written instructions. The testees listen to/read the instructions and DO what they are asked to DO. The ability to follow directions lends itself particularly well to this type of testing. The example below is a version of a technique known as 'Describe and Draw'. The testees read or listen to the text and draw what it tells them to draw. Their success can be judged by their answer to the final question. If the example below was used as a listening task, the first stage would be listening and note-taking. The next stage would be using the notes to draw the diagram.

- 1. Take a pen, a ruler and a blank piece of paper.*
- 2. Draw a square with sides 5cm long on the left of the page.*
- 3. Write the number '1' under it.*
- 4. Draw a second square of the same size to the right of the first one, using the right side of square 1 as the left side of the sec-*

ond square.

5. Write number '2' under the second square.
6. Find the middle line shared by both squares and extend it 2-3cm - upwards.
7. Draw 2 lines to connect the top of this line to the top left-hand corner of square 1 and the top right-hand corner of square 2.
8. Draw a square with sides 2cm long in the middle of square 1.
9. Draw a rectangle 2cm by 3cm inside square 2. Use the bottom line of square 2 as one of the short sides of the rectangle.
10. What have you drawn? _____.

11.6 Testing Writing

11.6.1 What ought to be tested?

When looking at how well learners can write in the L2, we are in fact looking at the same sort of skills as are looked at when judging peoples' ability to write in the L1. The three main areas are:

- a) Mechanical writing skills:

Spelling

Punctuation

Layout (paragraphing, use of quotations, etc.)

- b) Content: Has the writer thought about what needs to be done and organised the ideas logically?

Are the language forms and vocabulary items used appropriate to the text function (narrative, description, argument, contrast, etc.)?

Is what has been written relevant to the topic?

c) **Judgement:** Is the writing appropriate for its purpose and audience?

Has the level of formality or informality been judged correctly?

What learners should be asked to do in a test of L2 writing depends on what they might realistically need to do when they complete their studies. In the Chinese context this might include:

- a) Writing personal and business letters.
- b) Filling in forms with personal details.
- c) Writing academic papers.
- d) Writing publicity materials for business or tourist related purposes.
- e) Academic, literary or business translation.

The writing of compositions, which is the most common form of writing task given, is not one that bears much relation to writing in the real world. We do, however, recognise that such writing will continue to be common in tests of L2 writing for some time to come.

More or less realistic contexts for the sorts of writing tasks listed above might be:

- i) **For business letters:** Writing applications for jobs.
 - Writing to ask for information about courses of study.
 - Writing to invite foreigners to give lectures or to attend receptions or banquets.
 - Writing to thank people for having given lectures, judged competitions, etc.
- ii) **Filling in forms:** Personal details of education and employment.
 - To apply for visas.
 - To open bank account.

To book plane ticket.

Entry and exit cards at airports.

iii) Personal letters: Descriptions of home, school, college, etc.

About family members and what they are doing.

Asking about the reader's activities, studies, family, future plans, etc.

Extending invitations.

Proposing joint activities.

iv) Publicity materials: Writing brochures recommending one's college to foreigners wishing to learn Chinese.

Writing descriptions of the tourist attractions of one's home town or province.

Writing descriptions of particular products that might be successful in international markets.

v) Writing translations: Publicity materials and advertisements.

Short newspaper articles.

Whatever the type of topic set, it is preferable, as mentioned above, to ask for more than one sample of the learners' writing. Thus two or more shorter pieces of written work of different types are likely to give a better idea of a learner's proficiency than one longer piece of writing. It is also important to try and define the topic as closely as possible so that all learners understand what they are supposed to do in the same way. So for example:

A letter topic (formal):

You hope to study abroad and have requested details of available courses from various foreign universities. One of these has replied asking you to write a letter giving details of your education to date, your

reasons for wishing to study overseas and how you intend to support yourself financially. Write them a letter covering the points mentioned.

A letter topic (informal):

Your penfriend is going to visit China for 3 weeks. She wants to meet you and see as many of the main tourist sites in China as possible. She will be arriving in and leaving from Beijing.

She has asked you for advice on where to go and how long to stay. She would like to spend at least one week in your hometown. Write and suggest what she could see and do in the time available and when it would be most convenient for you to meet.

A composition:

Write a story about a girl who tried to set a new record by flying her kite for 5 days continuously. Include answers to the following:

Why she wanted to set the record.

What her friends and family thought of her idea.

Where she chose for her attempt.

Whether she succeeded / why she failed.

Who helped / hindered her in her attempt.

Publicity material:

Write a description introducing one of the local specialities produced in your home-town to people overseas. Make sure you cover the following points:

What the product is called.

What it is—something to eat / wear / use.

What it is made of.

How much it costs.

What is special about it.

Why foreigners might be interested in buying it.

11.6.2 Marking tests of writing

We have seen above that by defining the writing task as closely as possible and by taking more than one sample of the learners' writing we can try to increase test reliability. How, though, is it possible to increase scorer reliability in the marking of written work?

The first decision that needs to be made relates to what marking method will be used. There are three main possibilities, each of which has positive and negative points.

The Mechanical Accuracy method looks only at the form of what is written. Using this method the test writers decide how many marks will be given for correct punctuation, spelling and grammar. The scorers then go through the scripts, deducting one mark from the total for each error made.

The advantage of this method is that it is objective and so reliable. The disadvantages are that it ignores the content of what has been written. Whether what has been written is understandable or not, and whether it is relevant to the topic is not considered. This makes this method of marking unreliable, because the main purpose of writing is to successfully convey meaning. In addition language tests which mark using this method encourage students and teachers to view accuracy of form as more important than the ability to express meaning in written language. They, therefore, have a negative Backwash Effect on the teaching of writing in the L2 classroom.

The Analytical method is more flexible. It again requires the test writers to decide beforehand what aspects of the writing should be considered. For example:

5 4 3 2 1

GRAMMAR

VOCABULARY

MECHANICS

FLUENCY

CONTENT

(Mechanics refers to spelling and punctuation, Fluency to appropriacy of style and how easily what has been written can be understood, and Content to the extent to which what has been written is relevant to and DOES what the title asks it to DO).

The disadvantages of this method are that it is time-consuming and very subjective. One way of lessening the subjectivity is to have each written text scored by more than one marker. Since the marking is so time-consuming this is not very realistic and so this way of scoring remains subjective and unreliable.

The main advantage is that the features for which marks are given or the number of marks given for each feature can be altered to suit the learners' level or the needs of the task. For beginners, for example, teachers could increase the proportion of marks allocated to grammar, vocabulary and mechanics, while for advanced students more marks might be given for fluency.

The Impression Marking method is one in which the scorer reads through the written text very quickly and gives a mark based on the overall impression. Marks are usually based on a narrow scale, say 0-5, and can then be multiplied by 2 or 4 to give a mark out of 10 or 20. Before

beginning, scorers need to know where the Pass-Fail line is to be drawn, (for example 0-2 is a Fail and 3-5 is a Pass), and need to be told how many scripts they are expected to mark in an hour. This number should be high enough to make it impossible for them to go back and analyse scripts more closely.

The advantage of this method is that it is quick and that it is, therefore, possible to have a script marked more than once. Marking by more than one scorer makes this method potentially more reliable than either of the others. The disadvantage is that multiple marking needs to be organised.

Whatever marking method is chosen before the scoring begins, all scorers need to be brought together to look at the writing questions and consider for each task:

- a) What type of task has been set? Is it a description, a comparison, a narrative?
- b) On the basis of (a), what grammatical and organisational features ought to be present? How should the text be organised?
- c) What content will scorers expect to find? What is essential?
- d) What stylistic features will and will not be appropriate for a piece of writing of this type?

They should also ideally have a chance to practise marking a few texts and compare the marks that they give with those given by other scorers to check that everyone means more or less the same by a mark of, say, '4' or '2' on the above scale.

Such elaborate preparation of scorers may not be practicable for an ordinary mid-term test. But at the very least points (a) to (d) above should be considered and discussed by all teachers involved, before any written test item is marked.

11.7 Testing the Spoken Language

11.7.1 Why test spoken language?

For at least the last 30 years, language teaching methods used in many parts of the world, (for example, the Direct, Audiolingual and Communicative methods) have based their teaching of the L2 on the spoken rather than the written language. However, actual testing of learners' ability to produce the spoken language has been rare.

There are several reasons for this. Firstly, what should be tested? Is a speaker who can produce perfectly pronounced, grammatically correct, but very stilted speech, better than one who communicates fluently, but with a strong accent and many grammatical mistakes? Secondly, how can speaking and listening ability be separated? Speakers' success in communicating messages in the L2 may, on a specific occasion, be partly because they share interests or experiences with a particular listener. Different listeners may find the same speaker more or less easy to understand. How does a scorer decide what mark to give? Thirdly, spoken language is transient. Scorers must make up their minds as they listen; a very definite case of *impression marking*. Learners can be tape-recorded of course, but listening again later, the scorers cannot really recapture and make allowances for all the features present during the actual spoken test, (for example the learners' nervousness). The administration of oral tests is also very time-consuming, since if it is going to be done using the oral interview format, each learner does need to be allowed at least 10-15 minutes. An alternative is testing in the language laboratory. This allows large numbers of students to be tested simultaneously, but, as we will see below, the laboratory limits the sort of speak-

ing that they can be asked to do.

If testing oral ability is so difficult, is it really worth doing? We believe that some test of oral ability should be part of most language tests, because of its positive Backwash Effect. If administrators and parents, teachers and students all know that language tests do have an oral component, then they will all agree that a certain amount of oral work must take place in the classroom. If language tests continue not to test oral ability, then the development of such ability in the classroom will be regarded as unimportant.

11.7.2 Ways of testing spoken language

11.7.2.1 Reading aloud

While it is possible to test learners' pronunciation, intonation, stress in this manner, and such tests are fairly easy to prepare and to administer they also have some disadvantages. Firstly, reading aloud is a specialised skill and not something that most people often do in real life. It cannot, therefore, alone, be a valid test of oral ability. Also, if this aspect of oral production is overstressed in testing, there will be negative Backwash Effects in the classroom.

If test writers wish to use reading aloud as part of an oral test, they ought to try to think of everyday situations in which people might actually read aloud. Possible examples of such situations are the reading out of instructions for using a new piece of equipment, or a recipe or extracts from a letter whose writer is also known to the listener. Test writers must also decide, in advance, what features the text should have in order to test the above areas, for example Yes-No and 'WH' questions and relevant minimal pairs such as |p|:|b| or |f|:|v|.

11.7.2.2 Conversational exchanges

These types of questions are suitable for use in the language laboratory. They aim to test learners' ability to manipulate the L2 and to initiate and respond to conversation in appropriate ways in varied contexts. Their advantage is that many learners can be tested simultaneously and their responses can be objectively marked, thus increasing reliability. The main disadvantage is that they are very controlled and so do not test the learners' ability to use language in natural and unpredictable, real-life communication. As with Reading Aloud, therefore, a speaking test of this kind cannot, alone, be a valid test of a learner's oral ability. Examples of possible question types are:

a) Pattern manipulation:

Learners hear: *It is raining heavily. Jim and Susan are waiting at home, impatient to get to work in their garden.*

Pattern: *They wish it would stop raining.*

After this and one or two other examples, learners hear similar sentences and are expected to manipulate them in the same way.

Learners hear: *George has a small black and white TV. All his friends have big colour TVs. He would like a colour TV, too.*

Learners say: _____

b) Appropriate ways of initiating conversation in given contexts:

Learners hear: *A friend of yours has forgotten where he put his glasses. He cannot see very well without them. What could you say to him?*

Learners say: Anything that is appropriate in the context. So here they might say—

'Can I help you look for them?'

'When did you last wear them?' ...

- c) Appropriate response to given stimulus:

Learners hear: *Do you mind if I use your pen for a moment?*

Learners say: Any appropriate response. For example:

'No, not at all.'

'No, of course not.'

'Sorry, I need it myself at the moment.'

Questions of this type are particularly useful for testing learners' ability to use routine formulas for common functions such as thanking, apologising, complimenting and so on.

- d) Appropriate responses to extended stimulus:

Learners hear: *You are on your way to the market. A man comes up and speaks to you.*

MAN: *Excuse me, I wonder if you can help me, I'm looking for a post office.*

PAUSE FOR LEARNERS' REPLY

MAN: *Thank you. Do you know what time it opens?*

PAUSE FOR LEARNERS' REPLY

MAN: *Thanks a lot. Oh by the way, is there a public telephone near here?.....*

PAUSE FOR LEARNERS' REPLY

etc.....

The problem with items like this is that the second stimulus takes no notice of the learners' responses. If, for example, the learners say *'Sorry, I don't know'* which would be a perfectly reasonable answer to the first

question, the rest of the exchange becomes ridiculous.

None of these types of test item test real spoken language, but they are convenient and practical and so are often used.

11.7.2.3 Visual stimuli

As with tests of listening, pictures, maps, graphs and diagrams can all be used as the input for tests of spoken language. Once again it is possible to conduct such tests with large numbers of learners in the language laboratory and then listen to the tapes afterwards and award marks. Visuals can also be used as part of the input for oral interviews (see below).

The map at Section 11.5.1, could be used. Learners would be asked to describe aspects of the island.

11.7.2.4 Oral composition

A further, more flexible, way of testing spoken language both in and out of the laboratory is to give the learners a topic about which to speak for a specific time. This could be a simple descriptive topic like 'My family', or a more demanding one like 'Of the courses that you have taken when learning your L2, which have you found most/least useful and why?'

There are two advantages to this method. Firstly items are easy to prepare. Secondly it is possible to vary the level of the test both by changing the topic and by deciding whether to give learners time to prepare before they start speaking.

The disadvantage is once again that learners are not being tested on their ability to use spoken language in the way that is most normal. That is, in spontaneous interaction with other people which demands the

ability to adapt what is said to the reactions of a listener.

11.7.2.5 The oral interview

Oral interviews require each learner to spend at least 10-15 minutes talking to an examiner and can be designed to test ability to use a wide range of language. Such interviews require examiners to have decided beforehand what sort of language they hope to elicit and to have prepared a range of questions and topics that they feel will be likely to elicit it. The interview might, for example, include:

- a) Greetings and introductions.
- b) Talk about personal matters—i.e. home, family, education, hobbies.
- c) Talk about the past or the future—career plans or recent holiday period.
- d) Asking the learner to find out information about the examiner.
- e) Farewells.

What can realistically be expected from a short interview will vary according to the level of the learners being tested. Thorough preparation by the examiners is very important.

The great advantage of this form of testing is that it does test the learners' ability to use the language in more or less unpredictable interaction. It is thus a more valid test of speaking than the methods outlined above.

Its disadvantage is that it is very time-consuming and depending on the numbers being tested, may require a large number of examiners. Also reliability is reduced by two factors. Firstly, the scoring is subjective. Secondly, testees' performance at a particular time on a particular

day in circumstances in which they are likely to be nervous may not give a true picture of ability.

11.7.2.6 What should a test of oral ability contain?

If we compare the five types of oral testing that we have considered above we find:

LANGUAGE	MARKING	RELIABLE	VALID ALONE	POSSIBLE IN LABORATORY?
Reading aloud	Objective	X	√	Yes
Conversational Exchange	Objective	X	√	Yes
Visual Stimulus	Slightly subjective	?	√	Yes
Oral composition	Subjective	√	√	Yes
Interview	Subjective	√	X	No

It seems that the oral interview is the only method of testing spoken language that can be considered a valid test of oral ability. In terms of practicality and reliability, however, it is problematic. If oral ability is to become a regular part of language testing in China, then methods that allow the use of the language laboratory seem to be most realistic. A test that incorporates 3 or 4 of the suggested methods will also test a fair sample of the learners' oral skills. For practical reasons it seems that oral interviews are likely to be only occasionally possible in most schools and colleges. There are, however, some contexts, such as a proficiency test for learners hoping to study abroad or to work with foreigners in China, where the oral interview should be an essential part of the test.

11.7.3 Marking tests of oral ability

In order to reduce the subjectivity of the marking of oral tests, scorers need to be prepared beforehand. As with the marking of written tests, the scorers need to meet and decide together how the allocation of marks is to be divided between accuracy and fluency. They need to discuss, if dealing with a visual stimulus or oral composition type task, what information they expect to be given, what language structures and vocabulary items they expect to be used and how they expect the spoken language to be organised.

On the basis of this preparation they can devise a marking scheme for each test item. This should not in most cases be based on native speaker performance, but on a realistic assessment of what a good, average and poor performance by their learners will be like. It can be as detailed as is desired, but, if impression marking is agreed upon, it should only include brief notes about the standard expected at each level from 0-5 on the impression marking scale.

- 0— The learner was completely unable to express the information in words.
- 1— The learner had *great difficulty in expressing himself*. Due to phonological, grammatical and vocabulary errors he was very difficult to understand.
- 2— Although the learner had considerable difficulty in expressing himself, it was possible, with effort, to hear that he was trying to complete the task in an organised way.
- 3— The learner completed the task adequately. Although he made many mistakes and was sometimes very hesitant, this did not seriously affect his comprehensibility.
- 4— An easily understandable and generally accurate answer.

His answer was well organised and the information was presented with few mistakes and little hesitation.

- 5— An excellent summary of the information given. Pronunciation was not perfect and some grammatical mistakes did occur, but these were minor and did not affect comprehensibility in any way.

11.8 Conclusion

In this chapter we have tried to show that there are a variety of ways of testing learners' ability to use the language. While some of the methods discussed do raise practical problems, for the sake of positive Backwash Effect from tests to the classroom we feel that tests should include at least some of these kinds of items. It should be possible to incorporate some of the objectively markable items that have been suggested into tests at most levels without too much difficulty. Tests of oral and written language do require some pre-planning and organisation. We feel, however, that the work they involve is worthwhile and necessary if learners are to develop their ability to produce the language.

FURTHER READING

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12

LANGUAGE TEACHING APPROACHES FROM THE PSYCHOLINGUISTIC/ SLA POINT OF VIEW

In Chapter 1 we saw that any language teaching method is implicitly or explicitly based on an Approach which answers the questions 'What is language and How are languages learned?'. These answers determine the Design of the language syllabus and language learning activities, which, in turn, determine the Procedure, what the teacher and learners actually do in the classroom and what materials they use.

In this final chapter we will look at four methods: the Grammar Translation method(GTM), The Audiolingual method(ALM), Communicative Language teaching(CLT) and Krashen's Natural Approach(NA). We will look at the extent to which their Approach(and thus their Design and Procedure) leads them to follow, to ignore or to underestimate Psycholinguistic/SLA research evidence at both the theoretical and the practical levels.

We will conclude with a discussion of the factors that need to be

considered by anyone planning the provision of L2 teaching for a particular group of learners and will provide an example of the decision making process for a specific group of Chinese learners.

12.1 The Grammar Translation Method (GTM)

12.1.1 Approach—View of language and learning

GTM views the written sentence as the basic unit of language. It regards a language as being made up of a series of describable rules for combining sounds to words to sentences. Knowledge of a language is measurable by testing whether learners know these rules well enough to be able to translate quickly and accurately from the L1 to the L2 and back again.

The view of language learning emphasises the importance of memorising grammar rules and vocabulary. These are eventually fixed in the memory thanks to detailed study of and practice at using grammar rules and vocabulary items in exercises and translations. Once firmly fixed, the L2 knowledge will be available quickly and automatically for further translation tasks.

Neither the view of language nor the view of learning is very fully developed.

The GTM view of language and learning seems to ignore or underestimate:

- a) the existence of language structure above the sentence level.
- b) the fact that the function of the rules of language is to carry meaning.
- c) the effects of grammatical and semantic context on meaning and

- the importance of redundancy as an aid to comprehension.
- d) the role of non-linguistic information in the long-term memory in the production and comprehension of language.
 - e) the fact that some sentence patterns and vocabulary items in any language are more frequent than others and so are both more useful and probably easier to remember.
 - f) the fact that the extent to which a topic in the L2 is perceived as relevant or interesting by a learner is likely to affect how well it is remembered.
 - g) that using structural knowledge to do more or less realistic things with the L2 seems to play an important part in fixing such knowledge in the long-term memory.

12.1.2 Design and procedure

12.1.2.1 Objectives, syllabus and activities

The objective of a pure GTM course is to learn the L2 well enough to be able to read and translate texts in the L2 quickly and accurately. The syllabus is based on the written language and emphasises accuracy. It is based around a set of written texts constructed to introduce grammar and vocabulary in a systematic way. The main activity is reading the text word by word to analyse the grammatical structures and the meaning of the vocabulary items in the context in which they appear. Structure and vocabulary are then practised through rote memorisation and the completion of written exercises that follow the text.

These objectives and this view of the syllabus and of activities seem to ignore or underestimate that:

- a) proficiency in the written language alone may not meet every

- learner's needs.
- b) reading a text word by word is not how people normally read.
- c) normal texts are not constructed to demonstrate grammatical structures.
- d) vocabulary items and grammatical structures may have different meaning in different contexts.
- e) the comprehension of written texts is helped by redundancy and the use of general knowledge.
- f) success at purely mechanical, controlled, practice of language structures is no guarantee that they can be produced quickly and correctly in real-life contexts.
- g) language is always used for a purpose.
- h) learner motivation is likely to suffer if the range of L2 practice activities is very narrow and predictable.

12.1.2.2 The role of teachers, learners and materials

Teachers, as controllers of the textbook, are the source of all input to learners (in the EFL context). They must prepare the texts carefully in order to be able to explain their structure and the meaning of the vocabulary items they contain (in the L1 if necessary), sentence by sentence. Teachers organise the practice exercises, ensure that output is accurate and are supposed to know the answer to any grammar or vocabulary questions that the learners might ask.

The learners are their teachers' passive followers. They follow their explanation of the text. They try to memorise the vocabulary lists for each text. They manipulate the structure rules and vocabulary to complete the exercises allocated. They are not expected to be initiators of anything relating to L2, except questions about points of grammar or vocabulary.

The materials consist of the textbook. The texts, grammatical explanations, vocabulary lists and practice exercises are supposedly graded from easy to more difficult in terms of the complexity of structure and vocabulary. All structure and vocabulary items on the syllabus tend to be treated as equally important in terms of the time spent on teaching and practising them. The format of each chapter is usually identical.

The GTM view of the role of teachers, learners and materials seems to ignore or underestimate:

- a) that learners are individuals whose own interests /experiences may be usable as contexts for language learning and practice activities.
- b) that grammar rules and vocabulary items, in contexts different from those in the texts, may carry different meanings.
- c) that the teacher, once he has prepared his texts thoroughly for the first time, has very little further work to do when teaching the texts for a second or subsequent time. Teachers' scope is very limited.
- d) that encouraging the idea that teachers know all the answers may mean that they are worried by learners' questions rather than welcoming them. This may have negative effects on the classroom atmosphere.
- e) that encouraging learners to view the L2 only as knowledge to be learned may mean they find it difficult to understand that the L2, like the L1, can be used to DO interesting and relevant things.
- f) that encouraging learners to be passive and obedient means that they take less responsibility for their own success or failure.
- g) that within language certain structures and vocabulary items are more frequent and useful than others, and textbooks should re-

flect this.

12.1.3 Conclusion

If a course of L2 learning aims only to help the learners to read the L2 for a specific purpose (for example, to be able to read academic books and articles on Chemistry, Economics or Geography), then an adapted version of the GTM that:

- a) uses a high proportion of subject-specific texts of different types and difficulty levels as input.
- b) highlights the sentence structures and vocabulary items most frequently used in such text types.
- c) demonstrates the relationship between the usual discourse structure of a subject-specific text and its meaning. (For example, reports of chemistry experiments usually follow a particular sequence; the stages of the sequence are indicated by the following linguistic markers, etc.)
- d) makes some effort to show that texts can be read differently for different purposes might be adequate for the learners' needs.

If the aim of the L2 learning course is to produce learners able to do more than read the language, then GTM, alone, is unlikely to be sufficient.

12.2 The Audiolingual Method (ALM)

12.2.1 Approach—View of language and learning

The ALM prides itself on being 'scientific' in both its view of language and of learning. Its view of language is thus based upon what is

scientifically observable and describable: human speech. ALM, like GTM, takes the sentence as the basic unit of description. Just as in Physics, scientists have divided matter into ever smaller constituents, so the ALM divides up sentences until it reaches their Immediate Constituents—the level at which the language can be divided no further. For example:

The - chicken - s - eat - worm - s - in - the - garden
 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

By looking at sentences in this way it is possible to see both what classes of items can and cannot fit into each constituent slot (position 1–9), and which members of each class in each slot can and cannot combine with members of other classes in other slots. In this way it is possible to describe the morphological and syntactic structure of a language.

The ALM thus views language as a set of phonological, morphological and syntactic systems. Each item at each level of the system has rules about the slots it can fill and the items it can combine with. Knowing a language, therefore, involves knowing the rule systems of the language well enough to use only correct items in the correct slots and so produce only correct L2 sentences.

The view of learning claims to be scientific in that it, too, is concerned only with what can be observed. It is based on Behaviourist Psychology which regards learning new behaviour of any kind as a matter as establishing a mental association between certain types of behaviour and the consequences of such behaviour. This connection is established via a series of STIMULUS - RESPONSE - REWARD chains which, if repeated often enough, will lead to the learning of the desired new behaviour. This

idea, based on work with animals, has been transferred to L2 learners. Learning the L2 is seen as learning a set of new language behaviours or habits. Such habits are learned by the memorisation of sets of appropriate responses to specific stimuli. Learners learn the rule systems of the L2 by being drilled in the L2, structure by structure.

For example:

- | | |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| i) STIMULUS: I like cooking | v) STIMULUS: they |
| ii) RESPONSE: I like cooking | vi) RESPONSE: they like eating |
| iii) STIMULUS: eat | vii) STIMULUS: read |
| iv) RESPONSE: I like eating | viii) RESPONSE: they like reading |
- and so on.....

The drills are designed so that learners are unlikely to make errors. They should only produce and hear correct language and should be frequently REWARDED (praised by the teacher). Learners should not move from one structure to another until their responses to a particular stimulus are fully automatic, until they have learned the new L2 language habit. The meaning of responses is often secondary to the development of automatic accuracy.

The ALM view of language and learning seems to ignore or underestimate that:

- a) language structure exists above sentence level.
- b) natural spoken language often does not strictly follow the rule system at all levels of structure. Spoken language that is formally completely accurate can in some contexts sound abnormal.
- c) spoken language is affected by the context in which it is used.
- d) the speaker's intention will affect how a particular meaning is expressed. One form may thus have more than one meaning, or one

- meaning may be expressed by a number of different forms.
- e) unobservable non-linguistic knowledge plays an important part in the production and comprehension of any language.
 - f) people more easily memorise language that is meaningful to them.
 - g) people memorise meanings, not exact words.
 - h) the ability to make consistently correct responses to a stimulus in the classroom does not necessarily mean that a learner will be able to use the structure that has been practised in the less predictable context of normal communication.
 - i) when children acquire their L1, the feedback they get focuses on the appropriacy and accuracy of the meanings they express rather than on the correctness of the structures they use. Constant emphasis on correctness of form rather than the meanings the forms express is not how natural acquisition takes place.

12.2.2 Design and procedure

12.2.2.1 Objectives, syllabus, and activities

The eventual objective of the ALM is native speaker-like oral proficiency in the L2, as measured by the ability to produce consistently correct L2 sentences with more or less native speaker pronunciation. This implies a full understanding of which sequences of items can fill each constituent slot in any sentence, and the ability to produce examples of such correct sequences that are appropriate to a given context.

An ALM syllabus lists the language rules up to sentence level. It is likely to emphasise the areas where L1 and L2 structures are most different, assuming that these will be most difficult for the learners. It lists the

lexical items that will be needed to allow structures to be drilled and manipulated. Listening and speaking are emphasised. New structures are not presented in written form until the new oral habits have been fully established.

The activity types tend to be limited. Dialogues are used to provide contexts for the structures. The dialogues are memorised and the structures within them are isolated and memorised via drills and substitutions. The emphasis is on very firmly controlled activities, that minimise the possibility of learner error. It is not considered important that activities should try to provide practice in 'real-life' use of language.

The objectives, and the view of the syllabus and activities seem to ignore or underestimate:

- a) the unattainability of native speaker levels of L2 proficiency for the vast majority of L2 learners who begin to learn as adults or adolescents.
- b) the variation in learners' needs and interests.
- c) structural organisation above sentence level.
- d) the importance of context for the production and comprehension of spoken language.
- e) the differences between written and spoken language.
- f) that memorisation of structures and vocabulary in artificially constructed dialogues is poor preparation for using language in the real world.
- g) that mistakes are normal in spoken language.
- h) that interest and involvement in what is being learned aid memory.

12.2.2.2 The role of teachers, learners and materials

Teachers provide correct models of the L2, both in their own use of the L2 and through the materials. They provide the L2 stimulus to which the learners should provide the correct L2 responses. When responses are correct, teachers reward learners with praise, when incorrect the teacher corrects them. Teachers are in control of all classroom interaction. Such interaction is usually between teachers and learners. Learner to learner interaction is discouraged as it might result in incorrect language being used.

Learners are required to produce correct responses to the teachers' stimuli. They are not encouraged to initiate their own use of the L2 as this might result in error. The meaning of what they say in their practice drills and exercises is secondary to the correctness of form. They are not learning how to 'mean', but learning how to 'behave'.

All L2 input is provided by the dialogues and drills in the materials. The introduction of materials beyond the textbook and tapes is not encouraged. Dialogues are constructed to present grammatical rules, not to show how the L2 is actually used. Drills focus on and practise the grammatical rules. They minimise the possibility of error by firmly controlling possible learner output.

The ALM view of the role of teachers, learners and materials seems to ignore or underestimate that:

- a) the constant highlighting of error is likely to discourage learners from using the L2.
- b) providing the learners with only 'perfect' input is not realistic preparation for the L2 they will hear outside the classroom.
- c) restricting classroom interaction to exchanges between the

- teacher and the learners limits the amount of speaking that learners can do in the L2 classroom.
- d) one way the L2 can be fixed in usable form in the long-term memory, is by providing learners with practice at using it in the classroom.
 - e) the purpose of speaking is to express meanings and intentions that are *comprehensible to the listener*. The grammatical forms and vocabulary items are important only insofar as they carry meaning.
 - f) encouraging learners to be passive and unquestioning receivers of language, rather than active and experimental producers, is, alone, insufficient to prepare them for real-life use of language. Learners are given a false sense of security in their L2 ability.
 - g) the very rigidly prescribed materials positively discourage teachers from trying to match materials and how they are presented to the learners' needs and interests.
 - h) motivation to learn any L2 is increased if teaching makes some attempt to recognise and cater to learners' needs and interests.

12.2.3 Conclusion

Compared to GTM, ALM does recognise the importance of the ability to produce and understand spoken forms of the L2. It only partially prepares learners, however, for the realities of normal spoken language. The rigid emphasis on correct production of form with only secondary concern for the meanings expressed often results in learners whose knowledge of L2 structures is 'fixed' in the memory, but whose ability to use them to express and understand real intentions is very limited. The structures are linked to the dialogues in which they are pre-

sented and the drills in which they have been practised. Learners have little or no chance to practise their use outside these very narrow contexts. Real-life use of the L2 knowledge can, therefore, be difficult. The ALM has thus been criticised for producing learners who know a lot, but are unable to use what they know to DO anything in the L2.

Both the GTM and the ALM may succeed in fixing the rules of the L2, up to sentence level, in the long-term memory. Successful learners should know what are and are not acceptable strings of language according to the L2 rule system. They may also succeed in developing their knowledge of L2 vocabulary items, though with little discrimination as to the frequency and usefulness of the items the Mental Lexicon contains. Neither method though can, alone, prepare learners for the world of natural L2 use, especially the use of spoken language, where rules are not always followed and where it is at least as important to be able to express and understand meanings quickly, in a natural, spontaneous, appropriate way as it is to be able to express them with 100% grammatical accuracy.

12.3 Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)

12.3.1 Approach— View of language and learning

CLT views language in terms of its use for communication. Thus, while it agrees (with GTM and ALM) that language is made up of a set of describable rule systems, it goes further and also considers the purpose of this set of systems. The purpose of learning the rules of any L2 system is to be able to use the L2 to express meaning appropriately in a context. CLT acknowledges the reality that in any language:

- a) what is grammatically the same structure may in different contexts perform different functions. For example:

'I'm tired.' can be a statement/a complaint/a request to stop an activity/a suggestion to do something different....

- b) what are grammatically different structures may in different contexts have the same function. For example:

'Room 210 is nice and warm.' and *'Shall we use Room 210?'* are structurally different, but can both be used to express a suggestion.

Knowing a language thus involves both knowing the forms of the language and knowing whether it is appropriate to use FORM X in CONTEXT Y.

Part of knowing what language form is appropriate in what context involves knowing how to produce sentences that fit in with what has already been said or written. Learners, therefore, need to know the Discourse rules of L2 structure above the sentence level. They need to know how L2 sentences are normally structured and/or sequenced when telling stories and jokes, when having conversations with friends or interactions with bureaucrats, when sending a parcel at the post office or visiting the market, when describing themselves, their families or their homes. In addition proficient L2 learners must know how the appropriacy of particular forms in these, and other, instances of DOING things with language may be further affected by the people, the places, the topics involved. In short, as well as knowing the structure rules of the L2, learners must know the L2 Rules of Use.

CLT has no single, coherent view of how L2 learning occurs. There

are two main points of view. The first is that the L2 learning is, in many ways, similar to L1 acquisition and is a process of 'creative construction'. Learners gradually build up an increasingly correct picture of the L2 structure (Interlanguage) through hypothesis building and testing. Learners can see whether their hypotheses about the L2 structures are correct by observing whether they appear to interpret what is said to them correctly and by whether listeners react to their utterances as intended. The extent to which different researchers feel that such 'creative construction' can occur without any formal teaching of the L2 structure varies. The most extreme is Krashen's claim that Acquisition of the L2 is inevitable, provided that learners are well motivated and receive enough of the right type of input. This has been mentioned in Chapter 9 and will be looked at further in 12.4 below.

The second view is that of L2 learning as 'skill learning'. Learning a language is like learning any other new skill, for example, riding a bicycle. When people learn to ride a bicycle they start with the basics; keeping their balance, turning corners, stopping and starting. When the basics have been fully automatised and they no longer need to think consciously about them, they then move onto the crowded and unpredictable cycle lanes in the city and deal with 'real-life' cycling. The same happens when learning a language. The learners begin with the basics, grammar and vocabulary and then, after controlled and free practise at using the basics in meaningful contexts, these become sufficiently automatised to be available for use in unpredictable natural interaction with others.

The CLT view of language and learning seems to ignore or underestimate:

- a) that the Rules of Use and Discourse structure for English, or any

other language, have so far, been only very partially described. As a result they cannot be taught in the same systematic way as the structure rules. This is often not made sufficiently clear to syllabus designers, materials writers and teachers. As a result unrealistic and unachievable objectives may be set for courses of L2 study.

- b) the extent to which a thorough knowledge of grammar and vocabulary remains a necessary basis on which L2 proficiency can be built. In its keenness to teach Use rather than merely Form, some CLT practitioners have underestimated the need for, at least some, more formal teaching in the majority of L2 learning contexts.
- c) that the uncertainty about how people actually learn L2s, means that syllabus designers, materials writers and teachers cannot be sure that they are presenting the L2 to the learners in the most helpful way.

12.3.2 Design and procedure

12.3.2.1 Objectives, syllabus and activities

The objectives of a course of language instruction cannot be defined until the learners' needs have been identified. In order to identify needs, it is necessary to carry out a Needs Analysis. This Needs Analysis should first consider why the learners are learning the L2, what topics they will need to be able to communicate about, what situations they are likely to find themselves using the L2 in, and what roles they may need to play within those situations. Next, it is necessary to decide what vo-

cabulary, language structures and functions they will need to know, to what level of accuracy, in order to achieve their purposes. These structures and functions will then form the basis of the syllabus. The ability to use these structures and perform these functions quickly, accurately and appropriately for their own purposes will become the Objective of the course. It is feasible to identify L2 needs for those groups of learners who have very specific purposes for their L2 learning, such as airline pilots, hotel workers, and people studying for TOEFL. For the great majority of L2 learners in the world, learning the L2 for 'no obvious reason', identifying needs is far less straight forward.

Although there is considerable disagreement as to how learning takes place, CLT practitioners would generally agree that to help learning, the classroom should emphasise learning activities that:

- i) involve communication that is as real as possible — i.e. that involves communicating about something the learner does not know and is genuinely interested in.
- ii) involve meaningful tasks that require the learners to DO things with the language: for example, identify locations on maps/reach specific conclusions in discussions /successfully pass on instructions/find out and give information.
- iii) involve useful language —i.e. the language that learners might need to use outside the classroom, based around topics and situations that are useful, relevant and interesting to them.

These objectives and this view of the syllabus and activities seem to ignore or underestimate:

- a) that probably all learners need to learn the basic structure rules of the L2 in order to be able to achieve their purposes in the L2.

- b) that the carrying out of a thorough needs analysis is very time-consuming and expensive and so, often impractical.
- c) that for many classes of learners, it will be extremely difficult to establish a unified set of needs beyond certain vocabulary and structures of the L2.

It is perhaps more realistic to encourage teachers to find out what their learners' interests are, and base input and practice activities around these for at least some of the time, than to worry too much about identifying their actual future needs.

- d) that the devising and organising of learning activities with the above characteristics makes many new demands on teachers, which they may not be willing or able to undertake.

12.3.2.2 The role of teachers, learners and materials

Teachers ought to know their learners' needs and interests and be imaginative enough to use their knowledge, for at least part of the time, as the basis both for choosing input and for creating more or less realistic L2 practice activities. They cannot assume that the textbook alone will provide sufficient appropriate input, and so need to actively consider other sources. Teachers need to be flexible, able to organise effectively both teacher-centred, controlled, teaching of the L2 forms and freer, less controlled, fluency practice. Such flexibility requires teachers who have very good teaching and L2 skills, and who are able to create a good, cooperative classroom atmosphere. Such teachers will feel comfortable allowing learners to work alone, in pairs or in groups on fluency-based activities where the language used is less controlled. They will know that learners will do their best to use the L2 in the context provided. They will not need to worry about learners' errors, because they will be confi-

dent that they will be able to identify the most important errors for later controlled work.

Learners should be active participants in their own learning. They should let the teacher know what their interests and purposes for learning the L2 are. They will understand that it is necessary to learn vocabulary and language structure in order to be able to use it to achieve their purposes. They will cooperate with the teacher in making freer practice sessions a success, by consciously trying to use their L2 (and general/world) knowledge to perform the tasks set, even if they are not completely sure that they know all the necessary structures and vocabulary. They will contribute to the development of a good classroom atmosphere by encouraging, and being willing to learn from, each other.

CLT materials aim to help learners to learn structures in appropriate contexts and also to practise using them. The main source of materials may be a textbook which presents structures graded in a traditional way and then some activities to practise them. Materials may be task based sets of pair or group work activities and/or games that require the L2 to be used to perform a particular task or solve a specific problem. Materials may also be 'Authentic'. By 'authentic materials' is meant types of L2 input such as newspapers, maps, advertisements, cartoons, graphs, news broadcasts and weather forecasts that have not been specially written for L2 learners.

The CLT view of the role of teachers, learners and materials seems to ignore or underestimate:

- a) that most L2 teacher training courses still lay far more emphasis on improving teachers' own L2 proficiency or on aspects of linguistic theory than on actually demonstrating and practising the teaching and classroom management techniques needed in a CLT

classroom.

- b) the linguistically very demanding nature of the teachers' role and the lack of confidence in their L2 ability felt by many non-native speaker L2 teachers.
- c) the poor pay and conditions of many L2 teachers, and so the lack of enthusiasm for any change which demands a lot more work.
- d) the fact that teachers are judged by their exam results, and most exams do not test the ability to use the L2.
- e) the fact that in most classes the learners' main motivation for studying the L2 is to pass the exam. They will thus be as reluctant as the teachers to spend much time on non-exam-related activities.
- f) the fact that in many cultures it is inappropriate for teachers to relinquish formal, visible, control of the class. To do so will, therefore, be difficult for both teachers and learners.
- g) that varied L2 materials are often not available and few teachers have had any training in adapting available resources to practise the L2 in a variety of ways.

12.3.3 Conclusion

Clearly the implementation of CLT can, in many L2 learning contexts, may be hindered by many practical problems. However, if we briefly summarise its Approach, Design and Procedure in the light of Chapters 2–10, we find:

- a) The view of language does emphasise language as a means of conveying meaning. It recognises that language structure extends above the sentence level and that context is crucial to the way that meanings can appropriately be expressed and understood. It

thus acknowledges the importance of non-linguistic information in any use of language.

- b) Its view of learning is not clear. It is, however, agreed that learning is helped to occur if input is meaningful and is based on topics and activities that are relevant and interesting to the learners.
- c) A CLT syllabus should be based on learners' needs. How to identify those needs quickly and cheaply, and the extent to which all learners can be said to have a common need to be taught the structure of the language, is still a matter of disagreement.
- d) It is agreed that activities should provide opportunities for learners to use the language. The balance that should exist between a focus on accuracy and fluency should vary according to learners' needs.
- e) Teachers' and learners' roles in the classroom presuppose a good classroom atmosphere. The teacher tries to match at least some activities to learners' interests, thereby maintaining learner's motivation. Teachers and learners cooperate to allow the switch between more and less controlled activities to take place smoothly.
- f) Materials should be designed to provide teachers and learners with a balance of accuracy and fluency based work. At least some input should be 'authentic' to prepare learners for the reality of the L2 in use outside the classroom.

CLT is unclear about how the Rules of Use can be taught. It has no unified theory of learning and remains vague about how closely it is practical to tailor a syllabus to learners' needs and about the relative importance of accuracy and fluency. Nevertheless, CLT does seem to match the evidence from Psycholinguistic and SLA research more

closely than GTM and ALM. In the last 5-10 years even the strongest supporters of CLT have, again, acknowledged that knowledge of grammar and vocabulary is the foundation on which all other language abilities are based. Therefore the totally 'communicative' classroom is, in most cases (see Natural Approach below), no longer considered to be an efficient way of teaching the majority of L2 learners. A balance between teaching of form and practice of form is, once again, recognised to be necessary.

12.4 The Natural Approach (NA)

12.4.1 Approach—View of language and learning

The NA is very largely based on the theories of L2 Acquisition developed in the USA by Stephen Krashen. The NA view of language is not very clear. Language is seen as a means of communicating messages. In order to do this it is necessary to have a wide vocabulary. Grammatical structures are a means of combining vocabulary items into messages in a systematic way. Knowing a language requires a learner to be able to communicate naturally, but not necessarily completely accurately, in the language.

The NA view of learning claims to be based on the results of empirical research. According to Krashen, this research proves that there are many similarities between L1 and L2 acquisition. L1 children use the linguistic universals (Language Acquisition Device) with which they are born to 'creatively construct' the forms of their L1 on the basis of the input they receive and the interactions they participate in. L2 learners can also naturally acquire the forms of the L2 as long as they are provided

with sufficient comprehensible input. With sufficient input at the right (i+1) level, learners, (of English at least), will naturally acquire certain grammatical morphemes in a pre-determined order. These morphemes and further comprehensible input will then provide the foundation for learners to develop their knowledge of the language system via a similar process of 'creative construction'. Formal teaching of the L2 structure is thus unnecessary and cannot in any important way assist in the natural acquisition process. How much of any input will actually be useful to L2 learners' acquisition processes, and so become Intake (input that has become acquired), will depend on each individual's Affective Filter. For learners who have a high affective filter because they are unmotivated or nervous or embarrassed about using the L2, very little input may ever become part of the acquired store. Confident, enthusiastic learners with a low affective filter will, on the other hand, positively seek out as much input as possible, most of which will become Intake.

The NA view of language and learning seems to ignore or underestimate:

- a) the extent to which knowledge of the grammar rules is important for combining vocabulary items into comprehensible messages. Poorly combined vocabulary items may result in global errors which may seriously affect communication (see Chapter 7).
- b) the lack of agreement over the reliability of the research into the Natural Order. If the Natural Order does not exist, on what basis can L2 learners 'creatively construct' the rest of L2 structure?
- c) the apparent evidence that formal teaching of structure does have an effect on the rate at which L2 structure becomes available for quick and accurate use. If this is so then Learning does have a

positive effect on Acquisition.

- d) that the concept of 'comprehensible input' needs to be defined far more clearly if classroom teachers are to be able to provide it.

12.4.2 Design and procedure

12.4.2.1 Objective, syllabus and activities

The objective of the NA is to turn beginner L2 learners into intermediates. The specific objectives vary with learners' needs. Syllabuses, therefore, are only very loosely specified. It is recognised that teachers will have classes with slightly differing needs and it is up to them to identify what these needs are. The emphasis is generally on learning to DO day-to-day things using the spoken language. This reflects the sort of learners with whom the method has mostly been used: immigrants or students who are newly arrived in the USA. The activities are derived from comprehensible input based on the 'here and now': the classroom and the people in it. Learners are not expected to talk in the L2 until they feel ready to do so (this parallels the L1 child's 'silent period'). Initially, therefore, activities may not involve speech. Learners show comprehension by gesture or movement. Once learners are ready to speak, the input is altered to demand first simple, and then more complex, verbal responses. As learners become more proficient the range of activities develops to take in the world outside the classroom.

These Objectives and this view of the syllabus and activities seem to ignore or underestimate:

- a) how difficult the majority of teachers would find it to draw up the syllabus for their class.
- b) how many L2 learning contexts around the world are centrally

planned. The scope for the development of learner-specific syllabuses is very small.

- c) how learners from most cultural backgrounds would find it difficult to start taking immediate responsibility for their own learning in the sense of deciding when to start speaking.

12.4.2.2 The role of teachers, learners and materials

The NA is, especially in the early stages, very teacher-centred. Teachers have to provide their learners with a constant flow of comprehensible input. Such input after the initial 'here and now' stages should be based around the needs and interests of the learners. In order to identify these needs and interests and to keep learners' affective filters low, and so ensure that they benefit as much as possible from the input and the opportunities provided for output, teachers must maintain a good classroom atmosphere and group dynamic.

Learners should be actively involved in the development of their L2 proficiency. They take responsibility for the rate of their L2 development in that they decide when to start to speak, what they wish to say and how they wish to express their message. They are responsible for the focus of the input, in that they should let the teacher know what their own needs and interests are. They are also responsible for the comprehensibility of the input, since it is up to them to tell the teacher if the input is at the wrong level.

Few NA textbooks exist. The emphasis on using the 'here and now' of the classroom itself and later the wider L2 environment as a basis for input means that 'authentic' materials play a very important role. These have to be found by the teacher, who must then decide how they are to

be used.

The NA view of the role of teachers, learners and materials seems to ignore or underestimate:

- a) that teachers, especially non-native speaker teachers, will find it very difficult to maintain a constant flow of comprehensible L2 input.
- b) that maintaining the flow of input will be even more difficult outside the L2 environment where 'authentic' materials are likely to be scarce.
- c) that the majority of L2 learners expect to be told what and how to learn.

12.4.3 Conclusion

The NA is based on an unclear view of what it is necessary to know in order to be able to communicate messages. In its view of learning it draws close parallels between L1 and L2 acquisition. There continues to be considerable disagreement as to how valid these parallels are. Its ideas about comprehensible input being initially based on the 'here and now' (i.e. the classroom) and about the need for a good classroom atmosphere to encourage learners to take all the opportunities offered to use the language seem sensible. Leaving it up to the teacher to base the syllabus on learners' needs, may be feasible in some of the ESL contexts in which the NA has been developed, but would be very difficult for the majority of non-native speaker teachers outside the L2 environment. The NA assumes learners to be sufficiently clear about their reasons for learning the L2 to be able to tell the teacher what they want to learn. It assumes that teachers have the enthusiasm and skill to design a syllabus around the

learners' expressed needs and to find all the materials that will serve as input to the syllabus. These assumptions do not match reality in the majority of L2 learning contexts.

For what it claims to do, that is, equip L2 beginners with the survival skills to communicate fluently rather than totally accurately in the L2 environment, the NA may be adequate. For L2 learners outside the L2 environment, however, where needs are both less obvious and more varied, where teachers and learners are less confident and materials more scarce, it is unlikely to be appropriate.

12.5 Which Method or Combination of Methods?

There are millions of different L2 learners in different areas of the world learning different L2s for different reasons. They are learning in contexts that have differing cultural attitudes to education in general, differing perceptions of how Teachers and Learners should relate in a classroom and widely varying resources available. No single 'IDEAL METHOD' suitable for any L2 learning context can, therefore, be expected to exist. Each L2 learning context must decide for itself which method, or combination of methods will be most efficient and most practicable. In order to make such a decision as accurately as possible there are questions to be answered at each level of the Approach-Design-Procedure hierarchy. The possible answers to these questions can be imagined as being placed along a continuum whose extremes are very different from one another. Below we give answers that might be found at either end of each continuum. In most L2 learning contexts the answers chosen will lie somewhere between these two extremes.

- a) What is language and so what should knowing a language involve?
- i) Knowing a language requires learners to know the sounds, the structure rules and the vocabulary of the language and how to combine them to form correct spoken and written sentences.
 - ii) Knowing a language requires learners to be able to express their ideas and intentions in spoken and written forms, by correctly combining the sounds, structure and vocabulary in a way that is appropriate to the context that they are in.
- b) What processes are involved in learning any L2?
- i) Learning a language requires conscious study and memorisation of the vocabulary and structure rules of the language. Presenting the rules and vocabulary in a natural, meaningful, context is less important than providing opportunities for them to be learned accurately. Accurate use of the L2 in controlled contexts will ensure accurate use in the real world outside the classroom.
 - ii) The structure rules and vocabulary items of a L2 are unconsciously acquired if learners are exposed to sufficient natural L2 input appropriate to their level, and are encouraged to use the L2 as much as possible. Any formal teaching of such rules is thus a waste of time.
- c) What should be in the syllabus?
- i) All learners need to know the same: the vocabulary, sound and structure rules of the L2.

- ii) Different groups of learners will need to know how to do different things in the L2; the vocabulary and structures they need to know will depend entirely on their purposes for learning the L2.
- d) What sort of activities help L2 learning to occur?
- i) Activities should emphasise understanding and producing correct sentences. Learners should not move from one structure to the next until they are able to use the structure to produce consistently correct sentences in a variety of transformation and manipulation exercises. All activities should be firmly controlled by the teacher. Any classroom interaction should be between teachers and learners. Learners should never hear, or be allowed to produce, incorrect L2 sentences.
 - ii) Activities should emphasise the development of fluency in the L2. They should be based on topics and situations that are relevant to the learners' needs. They should recognise that a certain amount of error is normal in spoken language. They should be varied in type and should often involve learner to learner interaction in pairs or groups.
- e) What should be the role of the teacher?
- i) Teachers should follow the textbook and use it as instructed in the teacher's book. They should not look for or use other materials. Teachers should be the main model of the language and should ensure that the learners hear and produce only correct forms of the L2.
 - ii) Teachers should use as wide a variety of materials and activ-

ity types as possible. Input to the learners and the output they are asked to produce should be relevant to their purposes for learning the language. Teachers should be sufficiently confident and flexible to recognise that the extent to which the L2 used can be controlled will vary from activity to activity and that, therefore, their role needs to be flexible.

- f) What should be the role of the learner?
- i) Learners should follow the teachers' instructions. They should try hard to memorise structure rules and vocabulary and to complete exercises correctly. They should not initiate any use of language unless asked to do so by the teacher. The type of input they get or the type of output they are expected to produce is not their responsibility.
 - ii) Learners should play an active part in their own learning. They should let the teacher know what their purposes for learning the L2 are, and whether the input they are given is suitable. They should initiate use of the L2 in the classroom whenever they have ideas or feelings that they want to express. They are recognised to be individuals with strengths and weaknesses that differ from those of their classmates.
- g) What should be the role of the materials?
- i) The materials should consist of the textbook and (perhaps) listening materials. The learning activities should be strictly controlled and minimise the chance that learners might hear or produce incorrect forms of the L2. It is more important that texts provided as input demonstrate the correct use of

structure rules or vocabulary items, than that they reflect how the L2 is normally used. Similarly practice exercises should be designed to practise the accurate production or recognition of specific forms, more or less regardless of whether this results in natural sounding L2 sentences.

- ii) The materials used should not have been written especially for L2 learners. They should come from a wide variety of authentic sources. They should provide varied opportunities for using the L2 to express and interpret meanings in contexts that are relevant to the learners.

In any L2 learning context it will be necessary to make decisions at (a) to (g). Decisions made at (a) and (b) will inevitably affect the content of the examination towards which the learners are working. They will also determine the choices made at (c) to (g). Below we try to demonstrate how the choices at each level might be made for an specific group of Chinese learners.

The learners are a group of Middle School leavers who have been selected to study English in order to become Tourist Guides. They have all had 5-6 years of English at Middle School. The Middle School teaching has emphasised the learning of structure and vocabulary but has not given learners much opportunity to develop the skills of listening, speaking and writing. On completing the course they have to pass a National Tourist Board exam. This tests their ability to understand (listening) and to speak to English speakers of various nationalities about everyday matters. It also tests their ability to describe tourist sites, their ability to write simple English directions and instructions and their ability to translate Chinese signs, noticeboards and labels into English. The emphasis in the

exam is on accuracy but, in the test of spoken English (40% of the marks), minor errors of pronunciation and grammar, that do not affect comprehensibility, are not severely penalised. The majority of English speaking tourists in China come from North America (USA and Canada), Britain and Australia. There are also a number of other European tourists who normally have English speaking guides. These come mostly from Scandinavia and Holland.

a) What does knowing the language involve for this group of learners?

The main part of a tourist guide's job is to communicate orally with L2 native speakers about everyday matters and about matters concerning their holiday schedule. In order to be able to do this they need to know the main L2 structures, together with everyday and specialist vocabulary, well enough to use it appropriately in a range of fairly predictable contexts.

b) How can learning to 'communicate' in the L2 be helped to take place?

The main structures and some vocabulary should already be fixed in the long-term memory as a result of study at Middle School. Some new vocabulary will need to be learned, perhaps memorised. Most importantly the learners need practice at using their L2 knowledge and their general knowledge to communicate about life in China. The extent to which the language used in practice activities should be controlled may change during the course.

c) What should be the objectives of the course and what should be in the syllabus?

The objectives of the course are that the learners should pass the exam and in doing so become capable tourist guides. The syllabus should prepare the learners to achieve the objectives. The exam stresses accuracy. Although minor errors are not penalised, the Chinese language learning tradition favours trying to be as accurate as possible. The syllabus is likely to reflect this. It might include lists of everyday language organised around:

functions—meeting, greeting, apologising, requesting, suggesting....

topics— food, accomodation, shopping, travelling, history...

situations— at the hotel, at the airport, at the souvenir shop....

It might require learners to be able to listen to and understand L2 speakers with different accents talking about everyday matters. It might outline what should be the focus of the writing and translation parts of the course. It might detail what the learners should know about both Chinese and the L2 culture. The proportion of time to be spent on each aspect will be closely tied to the importance of each in the exam.

d) What sort of activities should the course provide?

To begin with, due to the Chinese learning tradition, and so the training that teachers have received, both teachers and learners will probably feel more comfortable with activities in which the language is strictly controlled by the teacher. While some drilling of new language may be necessary, the learners will be able to see that the language being practised is relevant and so that most activities have a purpose. In the later stages of the course the level of control will be lessened to prepare learners for the real-life contexts in which they will need to communicate. However the syllabus is organised, most of the language used in activities will be useful and relevant to the learners' eventual needs.

Wherever possible, activities will be designed to allow as many learners as possible to be using the L2 at one time. Some early activities will also aim to show learners how they can make use of their non-linguistic knowledge in communication. Further activities might involve more formal lectures or video presentations about aspects of L1 and L2 cultures.

e) What should be the teachers' role?

Ideally the teachers should have some experience of being a Tourist Guide. This is, however, unlikely to be the case and so teachers will need to develop some awareness of what the job involves. The teachers should be confident English speakers who are aware that the learners will vary both in their motivation and in the confidence with which they use the L2. Developing learners' confidence in their ability to speak English will play an important part in maintaining (or increasing) motivation. The establishment of a cooperative, encouraging classroom atmosphere will, therefore, be very important. The teachers should use the available materials to ensure that, whenever possible, the classroom language used and practice activities performed are obviously relevant to the learners' purposes: passing the exam and becoming capable tourist guides. They should be prepared to take full responsibility for the content of each class. They should be able to organise activities which demand that the learners use the L2 with each other as well as with them, and should realise that when doing so learners are likely to make errors. They should, therefore, also be able to distinguish between 'global' and 'local' errors, and be willing to ignore the latter.

f) What should be the learners' role?

Learners should recognise that they need to learn how to use what

they already know. They should be willing to cooperate rather than compete when trying out new types of language learning activity, so that each learner is willing to 'take risks' in the L2 knowing that his classmates will encourage rather than mock him. They should be flexible enough to cope with activities that demand sometimes accuracy and at other times fluency. Once made aware of how much useful general knowledge they have, they should consciously try and use it to help themselves understand and produce the L2.

g) What should be the role of the materials?

In the Chinese context teachers cannot be expected to find or adapt more than a few of their own materials. The availability of relevant materials is crucial if the language outlined in the syllabus is to be taught in practice. Materials required might include:

a textbook that presents and practises everyday language functions set in appropriate situations, together with a detailed teacher's book.

listening materials with speakers talking about everyday matters in a wide variety of native speaker accents, with accompanying activities.

specialist vocabulary lists relating to aspects of Chinese history and culture that tourists are likely to be interested in with suggestions as to how and when they should be presented and practised.

Realia such as local maps, menus, timetables and tourist brochures all of which learners might need to consult with (or for) English speaking tourists, with ideas about how they could be used to practise particular functions in appropriate situations.

We see then that first we have to decide on our answers to the questions at (a) and (b). For our group of learners the answer at (a) is 'to

communicate'. Their Middle School training will have provided most of the vocabulary and grammatical knowledge that they will need, so our answer to (b) is that they need practice at using what they know. Provided the examination mostly reflects the obvious needs of the learners, then the syllabus can do so too. As long as Chinese materials providing language and activities that reflect the syllabus (and so the examination) are available for the teachers to use, and as long as the majority of the learners are not studying against their will, it is reasonable to hope that teachers and learners will be able to achieve the twin objectives of passing the examination and being capable tourist guides.

12.6 Conclusion

Every L2 learning context is more or less different. It will, therefore, lead to more or less different answers to questions at the Approach, Design and Procedure levels. What is important is that the people at every level who are responsible for planning L2 learning know what questions need to be asked and against what the answers should be judged.

Asking the questions may in reality be seen as a two-stage process. The first stage involves answering the questions for a particular group of learners bearing in mind the evidence about the nature of language and L2 learning provided by Psycholinguistic and SLA theory. The answers at this stage will show what form the L2 teaching would ideally take.

The second stage is to modify the ideal in the light of reality, bearing in mind such matters as traditional attitudes to learning, the examination system, the amount of money available, and what can honestly be expected of the teachers. At this stage, therefore, the aim must be to modify the ideal as little as is consistent with what can actually be

achieved in the prevailing conditions.

Often the compromises that have to be made will be greater than is strictly desirable. However, it is better to set up a L2 learning programme that is less than ideal but actually achievable than one which is theoretically ideal but practically impossible to carry out, since in the latter case the end result can only be dissatisfaction and disappointment for everyone involved.

In this book we have tried to show the implications for the classroom of recent research in Psycholinguistics and SLA. For many language teachers the theories emerging from this (and other) research can often seem both difficult to understand and to have little relevance to their actual classroom situation. We feel, however, that an understanding of the nature of language and learning can help teachers to appreciate which of the choices available to them in the classroom are most likely to lead to effective learning.

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第一章 西方外语教学500年： 看法和方法

1.1 西方外语教学简史

600年前，在西欧所教、所学的最重要的外语是拉丁语。拉丁语有较长的历史，并与古典文化密切相关，所以有很高的威望和许多实际用途，被认为是当时（为数极少的）文人所应该学习的。在欧洲大部分国家，拉丁语用于教育和政府管理；在国际上，拉丁语用于宗教、政治和商业。现在不太清楚当时如何教拉丁语；但从其使用的众多场合来看，一定是书面语和口头表达同时学习。

15、16世纪，欧洲发生了巨大政体变革，出现了强大的民族国家，先是葡萄牙和西班牙，然后是法国和英国。拉丁语在各国国内很少使用，代之以各民族自己的语言。不过，其宗教语言地位和国际外交用途仍然保留，加之拉丁语是文学语言和哲学语言，所以文人继续学习拉丁语。现在，情况不同了：其实际用途几乎全部消失，在大多数情况下，只有阅读能力被认为是必要的。

当时教授拉丁语的方法（一直沿续到20世纪中期）是语法-翻译法的早期形式。到17世纪至19世纪初期，诸如英语、法语、德语等所谓的“现代”语言逐步在中小学和大学教授，其主要教学方法仍然是教拉丁语的方法。教学目的是教给学生理解（阅读和翻译）书面语言。讲解语法规则，提供词汇表和例句。用单句练习和成段练

习操练语法规则，然后译成外语或母语。这些练习中的句子（如：姨妈的钢笔在花园里）完全是为操练语法规则而设计的，而不是为了练习运用语言来进行交际。当时的观点是：只要掌握了语法规则，就能阅读这种语言。

当然，在这一时期，总有人学习外语不仅仅为了阅读，而且还会讲这种外语。早在17世纪就有人试图用对话的形式编写外语教材，而且对话的场景符合当时的情况（例如：“在咖啡馆”）。但是，一直到19世纪中期，铁路和电报的出现使在欧洲的交际大为方便，用外语阅读和讲话的要求才迅速增加。

结果，19世纪后期的语言研究者和语言教师开始共同研究一种教学法，使外语教学以对语言的科学研究为基础，以人类如何学习的理论为依据。在英国出现的改革运动中，语言学家强调语音研究的重要，并于19世纪80年代设计出国际音标（IPA），从此世界诸语言的发音可以进行系统的比较。

与此同时，在法国和德国出现了直接法。直接法主张，学习第二语言时应该参考学习第一语言的经验。重点应放在口语教学上，课堂上只许用第二语言。所教的语言现象应该是“日常语言”，即常用的句子结构和常用的词汇；学习者应在课堂上积极地使用这种语言。到20世纪初，法国和德国的中小学开始正式采用直接法。

在此期间，美国的学校继续强调只学习书面语言。英国也是如此。不过，像斯威特、帕尔默和霍恩比等语言学家继续寻求一种外语教学法，使语言结构的系统的教授总是在有意义的情景中进行。

美国加入第二次世界大战之后，他们突然发现，对于驻扎在亚洲和欧洲的美国士兵来说，外语的口语技能十分必要。美国当局求助结构主义语言学家，让他们给语言作出科学的描写；又求助于行为主义心理学家，让他们给学习作出科学的描写。他们的共同努力发展为听说法。听说法认为，口头语言是语言的最基本形式，在课堂上只许使用第二语言。他们把语言分成若干部分，每一部分代表

了第二语言结构系统的一个项目。学习时，要一个项目一个项目地学；必须在各种课堂操练中能够准确无误地重复出一个项目之后，才能开始学习下一个项目。错误是不能容忍的。他们认为，准确地说出正确结构比说出有意义的句子更为主要。其后的信念是，只要彻底了解语言的结构，就能自如地运用这些结构去理解别人和表达自己。（这一点与语法-翻译法相似，只不过听说法强调的是口语罢了。）

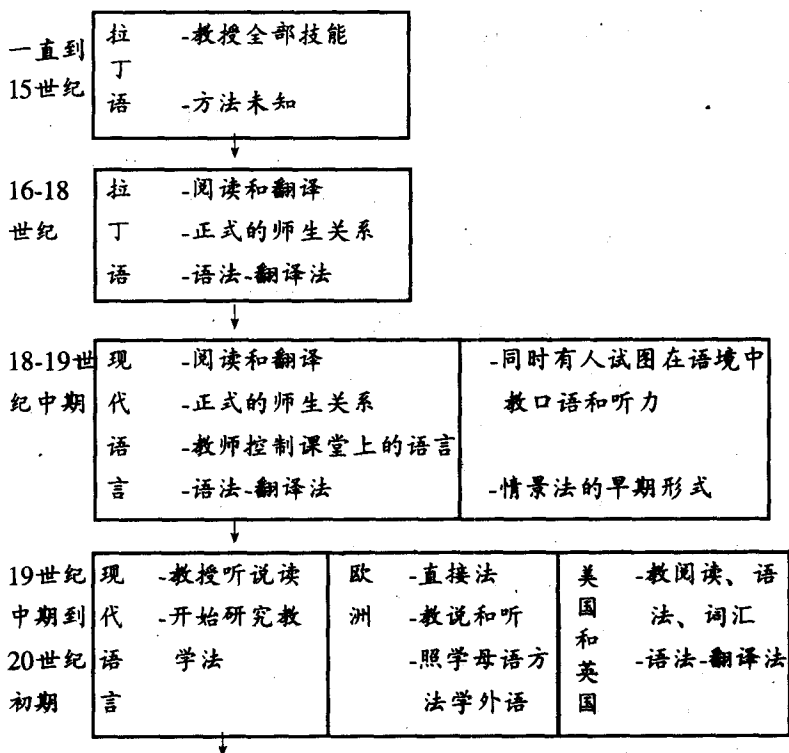
听说法在美国得到广泛采用至少长达20年之久，并在全世界一切受美国影响的外语教学环境中十分流行。不过，到本世纪60年代，人们清楚地看到，只懂结构规则不足以使学习者在实际生活中使用语言。

就在本世纪50-60年代，英国语言学家经过几十年的研究，推出了口语法和情景法，与听说法并驾齐驱。这些方法同样强调口头语言，强调结构准确性。不过，他们同时也强调，必须在自然情景中教授语言，才能使学习者能够使用所学的结构。

在此基础上，又出现了交际法，它是对听说法的一种挑战。交际法承认学习者有必要掌握语法规则，但强调指出，学习规则的目的是用第二语言做事情，完成一定的功能（例如，问路，表示歉意，表示感谢等）。交际法还认为，不同的学习者有不同的学习目的，因此有不同的学习要求；这些要求应该在教学大纲中反映出来。学习者犯些错误是学习过程的一个部分。应该鼓励学习者尽量使用语言进行有意义的交际活动，即使犯些错误也无关紧要，目的是为了增强信心，达到熟练。他们认为书面语言和口头语言将来都是学习者所需要的。如果某些学习者将来可能使用口笔两种形式，那么从一开始交际法就鼓励教授听说读写四种技能。教授新的语言项目时，教师要严格控制学生使用的语言。到练习使用时，教师应该逐步放松控制，直到他们比较自由地、正常地使用所学语言去完成某些任务或解决某些问题。交际法在世界上也很流行。

最近,到七、八十年代,人们更加强调学习者的个性——他们有不同的需要,有不同的性格,不同的学习风格。结果,又出现一些规模较小的教学法,如自然法,沉默法,全身反应法,集体学习法等。这些方法大都出自美国,强调课堂教学中要以学生为中心。学生参加大纲的设计,对自己的学习负一定的责任。教师的作用不完全是组织者和控制者,更象是位指导者,大纲的协调者和语言材料的提供者。总的来说,这几种方法从未广泛流行。

图1 15-20世纪欧洲和美国的外语教学法一览表



20世纪 中期	现代语言	-听说法 -教听和说 -避免错误 -强调准确性 -教师严格控制一切语言	英国和其他地区	-情景法和口语法 -教说和听 -强调在现实语境中使用语言 -教师控制全部语言	其他地区	-直接法 -语法-翻译法
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20世纪 50年代 到60年 代	现代语言	现特英 代别国 语是和 言英欧 语洲	-交际法 -教授一切技能 -强调在语境中熟练运用语言 -不同学习者有不同的需要 -教师有时允许自由运用语言 -犯错误是学习过程的一部分	美国和其他地区	-听说法 -语法-翻译法 -直接法 -情景法
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20世纪 70年代 到80年 代	现代语言	现特美 代别国 语是和 言英欧 语一些 地区	-自然法 -集体学习法 -全身反应法 -暗示法 -沉默法	-主要教听和说 -学习者有个人特点：不同的学习风格 -可象学母语那样学习结构规则 -学习者应对自己的学习负责 -教师的作用多种多样 -学习外语和学习母语有许多相同之处	其他地区	-以上提到的其他方法都仍在地区使用之中
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正如图1所示,目前,以上提到的各种教学法在世界的某些地区都有人采用。各种方法都对下列问题有不同的看法:

1. 什么是语言?
 - a. 语言首先是言语。
 - b. 语言首先是文字。
 - c. 语言既是言语,又是文字。
 - d. 语言是一个结构规则系统。
 - e. 语言是人类用来做事情的结构规则系统
 - f. 语言是人类用以互相交际的结构规则系统和因文化而异的社会行为规范系统。
2. 懂得一门语言包括:
 - a. 熟知其语法和词汇。
 - b. 熟知其语法和词汇,并知道如何用来做需要做的事情。
 - c. 知道其语法、词汇、语篇结构及其文化中的使用规则,四者共同决定在具体场合中如何使用该语言才叫得体。
3. 保证学到语言的最佳方法是:
 - a. 反复操练并记忆语法规则和词汇,直到脱口而出。
 - b. 通过使用语言进行自然的交际来学习语法和词汇。
 - c. 没有必要进行正式教授。学习第二语言完全可以象儿童习得第一语言那样去学习。
 - d. 不允许学习者犯错误,也不许他们接触不正确的语言表达方式。
 - e. 学习者练习用外语讲话时出现些错误是正常的,是可以接受的。
 - f. 学习者得到的语言输入应在语法和词汇方面有严格的控制。
 - g. 学习者应该接触尽可能多的自然语言的各种材料。

1.2 看法和方法：两个基本问题

如果教师需要决定，现有流行的诸多语言教学法中，哪一种（或哪几种的结合）可能是最好的办法，他们最好清楚地知道如何回答这两个问题：什么是语言？人们如何学习语言？

参照理查德和罗杰斯（1986）的观点，可以这样讲，一切语言教学法都在回答以上两个问题的基础上有自己的**看法**（汉语中常称为“路子”）。这种看法影响到教学方法的**设计**，以及教学方法所要求的教学大纲和课堂活动。反过来，这些因素又会决定着采用这种方法的人要遵循的**程序**——师生在课堂上应做什么，使用什么教材，一堂典型的课应是什么样子。

下面以语法-翻译法为例说明什么是**看法、设计和程序**。

看法

什么是语言？ 语言是文字。

如何学习语言？ 死记语法规则和词汇；练习两种语言互译。

设计

大纲的内容？ 第二语言的语法结构和单词表

教学活动？ 两种语言互译的翻译练习

程序

教师做什么？ 讲解语法规则和词汇（必要时可用母语）；示范例句；督促学生做练习；批改作业。

学生做什么？ 听教师讲课；努力记忆语法规则和词汇；照教师的布置去做作业。

所用教材？ 课本内容有语法规则，示范例句，词汇表，翻译练习。

一堂典型课？ 以教师讲解为主。教师完全控制课堂。每次上课十分相似。学生听教师讲，很少说话，教师让做什么就做什么。

可以看到,如何回答以上两个基本问题是有深远意义的。如果教师能够正确地回答这两个问题,而且选择正确的**看法**,就有可能搞好**设计**和**程序**,使尽可能多的学习者学好外语。

目前世界上流行着许多教学法和**看法**。本书的主要目的是帮助读者寻找哪一种看法或哪几种看法的结合能在特定情况下引出最有效的**设计**和**程序**。

1.3 什么是语言?目前的几种回答

在讨论心理语言学和第二语言习得理论有关语言本质和学习本质的研究之前,有必要先概括一下目前对这两个问题的回答。

1. 结构主义的观点

语言是在从音位到句子不同层次上的结构成分组成的系统。这些成分与词汇结合起来表达意义。每种语言中的这种结构成分都有限定的数目,学习者要学的无非是这些成分。学习者要学会语言的发音和组音成词的规则,还要学会构词法、语法,以便组词成句。一旦掌握了这些规则和一定数量的词汇,就算是懂得这种语言了。

2. 交际法或意念-功能法的观点

这种观点同样认为语言是结构成分组成的系统,学习者学会用这些成分去做事情(即完成某些功能)。他们学习外语可以是由于社会原因——如会见某人,打招呼,招待讲外语的客人;也可以是为了工作而学——如合同谈判,定货,在国际会议上宣读论文。

为了完成某些功能,学习者要懂得使用什么语法规则和词汇表达什么“意念”。意念指的是诸如“过去”,“现在”,“将来”,“必要性”,“可能性”,句中的施事者、工具、受事者的作用,人与人或物体之间的空间关系等。例如,“对不起,昨晚我迟到了”这句话,完成的功能是“道歉”,表示的意念是过去时间和现在时间,讲话人为施事者。再如“他从前不是比你更胖吗?”

这句话完成的功能是询问/核实，表示的意念包括过去和现在的对比、大小的关系、可能性、指示代词。持这种观点的人认为，懂得一种语言就是知道如何用语法与词汇表达一定的意念，以此完成需要完成的功能。只要会用这种语言做事了，就算懂得这种语言了。

当然，很可能不同的学习者要用外语做不同的事情。比如，北京的英语学习者可能希望到大饭店工作，有的也许希望到国际银行工作。他们要用外语做的事情则大不相同，尽管不是毫无相同之处；他们的教学大纲也应该不一样。

3. 交往法的观点

语言是交际工具，主要用来建立和维持人与人之间的关系。语言学习者除了要懂得语法和词汇之外，还需要知道在各种场合中使用语言的规则。例如，要知道讲故事和开玩笑有什么不同；参加葬礼时使用的语言和参加婚礼时使用的语言有什么不同；要知道与社会地位高低不同的人讲话时，如何变换自己的语言。

持这种观点的人认为，语言学习者应该知道句子层次以上和句子层次以下的结构和规则。这些语言规则和社会规范共同决定语言在社会环境中如何使用。

以上三种观点对语言的看法一个比一个更全面些。结构主义的观点把懂得一种语言局限在掌握结构规则和词汇上。交际法的观点又增加了需要懂得如何运用规则和词汇去做自己要做的事情。交往法的观点则认为，要知道如何用语言做事情，就要知道在什么场合、什么时间、如何去做才算是得体。要想了解本族语者在各种场合如何运用语言，就有必要知道句子层次以下和句子层次以上的语言结构和非语言行为的文化规范。

1.4 人们如何学习语言?两种理论

关于人们如何学习语言，尤其是第二语言，已有不少理论。按

照理查德和罗杰斯(1986)的观点,这些理论可以分为两大家。

1. 强调过程的理论

这些理论强调外语学习者所要经过的心理过程,旨在研究以下问题:

- a. 学习第二语言所经过的心理过程与学习第一语言时完全相同吗?还是需要建立一套全新的心理习惯?
- b. 第二语言的语法规则是径直教授好呢?还是应该让学习者自己找出这套规则呢?
- c. 对于大脑来说,是先教口语好呢?还是先教文字语言好呢?还是先教什么都无关紧要?

2. 强调条件的理论

这些理论强调激化学习者的心理过程的教学技术和课堂条件,注重研究以下几个问题:

- a. 学习者的语言输入是应该严格按难易程度分类,每次只教授一小部分,还是应该让学习者从一开始就接触各种程度的语言材料?
- b. 是应该鼓励学习者读懂或听懂每一个词,还是应该教给他们不用懂每一个词也能理解句意?
- c. 为了能够自由地、有效地使用语言,学习者需要做大量的操练和重复练习呢?还是应该给他们许多机会在課堂上自由交谈呢?
- d. 学习者应该通过教师只接触一种语言模式呢?还是应该尽量接触不同的语言模式?
- e. 师生关系比较正式、传统有利于学习呢?还是师生之间比较随便、没有等级之分更有利于学习呢?

可以看出,关于如何才能促进学习,研究者也是众说纷纭。

总的来说,今天的语言教学的特点之一就是教法五花八门,对语言的本质和语言学习的本质有各种看法。在以下章节中,我们将

讨论人们对语言的产生、语言的理解和语言学习的各种设想。讨论中，我们将借助于某些研究成果，逐步对本章提出的两个基本问题找出比较清楚的答案。

小结

本章主要讲了四个问题：

1. 20世纪世界上流行的语言教学方法越来越多。
2. 不同的教学方法有不同的**看法**：即对“什么是语言？”和“人们如何学习语言？”两个问题有不同的答案。
3. 由于**看法**不同，对应该教什么样的语言（**设计**）和如何教这类语言（**程序**）等问题也有不同的回答。
4. 目前的趋势是：
 - a. 学习者掌握语法结构和词汇，正是为了使用这种语言知识去表达意义，去做事情，去与别人交往。
 - b. 学习者是有不同性格的个人，学外语的目的不同，动机不同。所以，不同的学习者可能经过不同的心理过程。

参考书目

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3. 布朗费特和约翰逊（主编）：《语言教学中的交际法》，1980年，82-99页
4. A.豪华特：《英语教学史》，1983年，第十一至十四章

注：中文稿各章参考书目的出版者请参见英文稿相同部分。

第二章 口头语言的理解

阅读本章之前，请先考虑如何回答下列问题：

1. 说你“理解”别人的话了，到底是什么意义？
 2. 要想能够理解别人的话语，需要具备哪些知识？
 3. 谈话时，讲话的场景如何帮助听话人理解话语？
 4. 有人说，讲话人总有一定的原因才讲话，听话人也总带有一定的目的去听。果真是这样吗？
 5. 一种语言的口头语言与书面语言有什么不同？
 6. 口头语言与书面语言的区别应如何反映到外语听力教材之中？
 7. 一种语言的全部词汇对一个外语学习者来说都是同等重要的吗？
说某人“懂”一个词意味着什么？
-
-

2.1 理解的层次

听到一句话，怎样才可以说“那句话的意思我懂了”？其一，要懂得句中的词义。所以，所谓理解就是要把音与词联系起来。除此之外，还要知道相邻的词汇赋予一个词的附加意义。也就是要知道词汇搭配构成短语和句子的规则，以及这些规则如何影响句子的意义。

心理语言学家认为，对词、短语和句子的理解是对口头语言的第一层次理解。柯拉克夫妇（1977）称之为**构建过程**，佛斯和黑克思（1978）称之为**结构层次**。这几位作者认为，在这一层次上，听

听话人试图理解说话人表达的命题。他们说，命题是指句子的字面意义上的内容。通常，句子可以表达一个或多个命题。例如：

1. 苹果很贵。（一个命题）
2. 你的大衣在地板上。（两个命题：你有一件大衣；它在地板上）
3. 今天这里很冷。（两个命题：今天冷；这里冷）
4. 那些又好又红的苹果太贵了。（三个命题：苹果很好；苹果是红的；苹果很贵）
5. 彼特的朋友马克是位教师，他喜欢苹果。（四个命题：彼得有个朋友；那位朋友叫马克；马克是位教师；马克喜欢苹果）

总之，在第一层次上，听话人理解的是话语的字面意义。

不过，讲话人有时不想让自己的话只被理解字面意义，而是期望听话人理解字面意义背后的意图。这时，就面临着第二个层次上的意义。柯拉克夫妇（1977）称之为**利用过程**，佛斯和黑克思称之为**意图层次**。例如上文的例句2：“你的大衣在地板上”，它可以是陈述一个事实或是回答一个问题。但是，它也可以是批评（某人乱放东西），请求（对方把大衣拣起来）或命令（孩子把衣服拣起来）。例句3“今天这里很冷”，可以是简单的陈述；但在某种情况下可以理解为批评（比如批评对方没有烧暖气）、请求（对方打开加热器）或建议去另一个地方。

在第二层次上，听话人不仅需要理解字面意义，而且必须理解讲话人在某个特定场合想用字面意义表达什么意图。

在这两个层次上，听话人可能需要利用不同领域的知识。不仅需要关于语言形式的知识，而且要对讲话人与自己互相之间的关系有所了解，还要知道谈论的话题、已经讲过的内容，再加上一般常识、生活经历等。

所以，要充分理解口头语言就涉及到两个层次上的理解。一是字面意义，一是非字面的、意图中的、背后的意义。二者的界限并

不十分明确，也不能完全区别开来；因此，用于理解第二层次意义的知识和心理过程，同样也存在于第一层次。到目前为止，给第一层次意义构建的模式较为清楚。

2.2 第一层次意义——字面意义

柯拉克夫妇（1977）的模式说，为了解字面意义，听话人要经过四个阶段，都涉及到发生在短期记忆中的心理过程。

1. 听话人听到讲话人的声音，构建出语音图象。
2. 听话人识别语音图象所代表的词，并把词组成构成成分。
3. 识别构成成分的同时，又力求识别构成成分所表达的所有命题或部分命题。

4. 把构成成分结合起来，使其表达的命题具有字面意义。句子的字面意义储存在短期记忆之中，实际使用的词则被忘掉。最后，字面意义转移到长期记忆中去，把短期记忆腾出来，准备加工下一个句子。（见图2）

显然，四个阶段并非界限分明地依次进行，因为自然语言并非由单音或单个词组成，而是中间带有停顿以便让听话人一一加工处理。

下面就详细讨论每一个阶段，以及听话人在每一阶段该做什么，这或许对语言本质有所揭示，对语言教师也有所启发。

2.3 语音图象的构建

听到一句英语，听话人构建的语音图象不同于阅读时看到的文字图象。首先，所听话语只能听到一次。第二，话语中的音不太可能一个一个地吐出来，而且句子不一定都符合语法。有的音发得含糊不清。讲话人也许不善于表达自己，或者吞吞吐吐，或者多次重

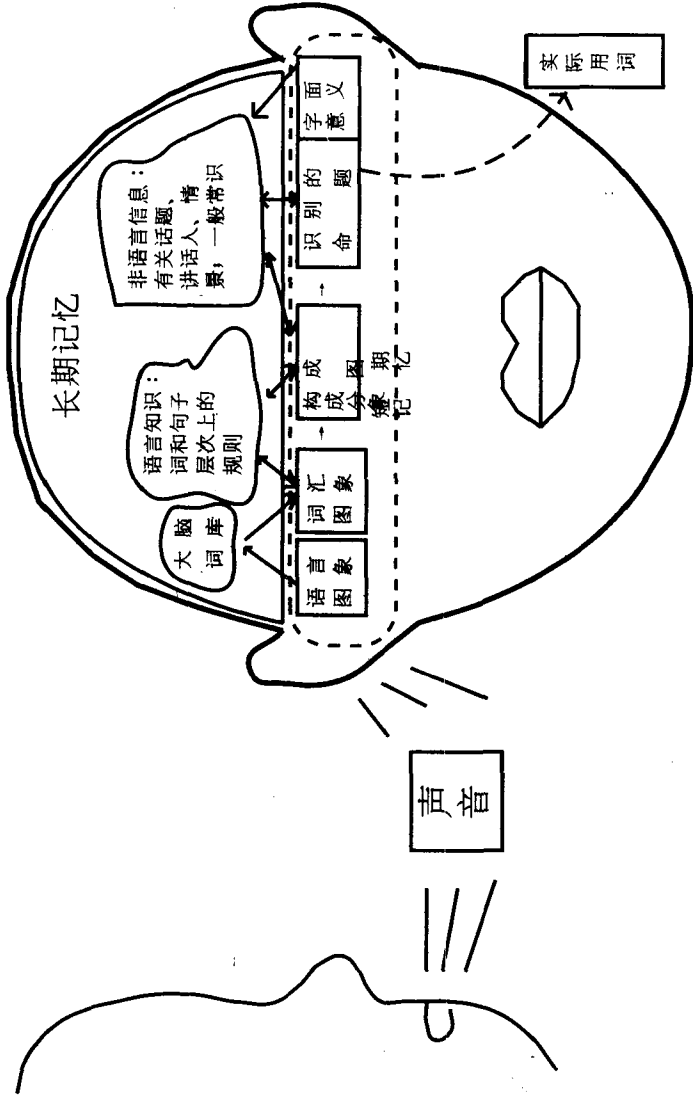


图2

复。第三，由于以上原因，词与词之间的界限可能很不清楚。第四，在流利的讲话中，讲话人很少完全按照意群停顿，重音和语调也往往不标准。

听话人所听到的东西，犹如只许读一遍的读者所看到的东**西**：**whenthasiangameswerinbeijin/theciticentewezverbusy**。（北京开亚运会时整个城市忙忙碌碌。）所以，听自然、流利的讲话时，听话人不仅需要有所听语言的语音知识，还要了解讲话的整个语**境**——话题，已经说过的话，讲话人的情况……——才能建立起话语的语音图象。

2.3.1 口语表达对语言本质的揭示

任何语言的口头语言都不如书面语言那样语法严谨。如果用书面语的标准来衡量，可以说口语是“有缺陷”的。这并不是指责口头语言，而是实际情况。此外，本族语者的话语并不一贯地、准确地遵循标准的发音、重音、语调等规则。一个词与人往往不是听一些陌生人偶尔讲一句什么话。听人讲话总是在特定的语境之中，因此对讲话人有所了解，对他们将要讲什么就可能略知一二。

2.3.2 口语表达对语言教学的启示

1. 既然书面语与口语如此不同，使用本来为阅读而写的材料作为听力练习材料是不合适的。书面语一般语法完整，内容紧凑，语言太规范，与自然话语差别太大。若听力材料以文字材料为基础，教师有必要改写文字材料，摘出其中的主要内容，然后以这些要点为基础，再用自然的口头语言讲出来。

2. 如果本族语者在流利的讲话中并不始终如一地遵循重读规则和语调规则，那么教师应该考虑，在教授这些规则上花许多时间是否合适。当然，应该保证学习者掌握基本语音语调，比如英语中的升调表示疑问句，但是花很大精力去教授这个连本族语者都不始终

遵循的规则，似乎是个浪费。

3. 反过来讲，既然口语与书面语相比有些“缺陷”，外语学习者很难听懂，那就有必要教授语音，并让学生知道这种语音在各种各样的语境中听起来是个什么样子。有必要让学习者听到许多不同的本族语者和非本族语者讲话，让他们认识到本族语者的发音并非完全一致。

4. 语言总是用于一定的语境之中。了解语境有利于预示可能听到的话语。所以，学习者的听力材料应该有具体的语境。不应该不向他们交待语境和听人说话的目的，就期望他们一听即懂。（关于语境问题，参见本章2.7节）

2.4 构建词的图象

任何语言的本族语者都知道数以万计的词。受过大学教育的英语本族语者知道多少词，不同的研究者有不同的估计。有的说21.6万（蒂乐，1978），有的说8万（米勒和吉尔地亚，1987），甚至有的说大约1.7万（哥尔顿，内生和利德，1990）。估计之所以相差甚远，是因为他们对词的定义不同，研究的方法也不同。不论哪个数字是准确的，都足以证明本族语者知道的词汇是数以万计的。但他们在说话和写作中实际运用的词远远小于这个数字。

据说，英语本族语者在五分之一秒之内就能认出他们懂的词，而且往往在整个词讲出之前就已经识别出来了（马斯伦-威尔逊和泰勒，1980，1981）。如果真的是这样，我们所知道的词一定是在大脑词库中组织得井井有条。对大脑词库的组织和储存，人们了解甚少。这里只介绍为众人所接受的一些发现。

以英语词汇为例，如何组织起来较好呢？首先想到的是应把它们分为两组。一组是为数较小、比较固定的功能词，这是一个封闭集。另一组是为数众多、变化较快的几大类内容词。这些词的组织

已有人用词汇联想实验进行过研究，给实验对象一个内容词，问他们首先想到的是什么。实验结果表明，内容词储存在大脑词库的语义领域之中，即按词汇的意义范围分成的小组，如厨房，家具，颜色，称谓系统等。

既然听话人要使听到的语音图象与大脑词库的词相匹配，那就说明大脑词库储存的信息一定有一部分是每个词的语音表达。听话人则要把在第一阶段构建的语音图象与大脑词库的语音表达相比较，一直到找到自己听到的那个词。

前面讲过，听话人识别词的速度是惊人的。这说明他们寻找语音表达时决不是毫无条理地进行，因为如果是那样，就算只把1.7万个词检索一遍，识别一个词也要花很长时间。能够很快地找到语音表达似乎有三个因素，其中两个互相关联。语言中的普通词汇和最近听到过的词汇识别得最快（福斯特和钱伯斯，1973）。有的研究者认为，这两种词汇可能与不常用词汇分别储存，单放在一种“袖珍词典”之中，所以查寻较快。也有人认为，也许这些词存在大脑词库的表面，查找时最先看到。常用词也可能是听话人最近刚听到的词，但未必尽然。例如，学语言学的学生可能最近刚刚听到诸如“词素”，“句法”，“指示词”等词，但它们并不属于常用词。所以听话人最容易识别的是常用词——或者是该语言中的常用词，或者是自己研究领域中的常用词。这是因为他们听到这些词的机会比其他词更多些。

有利于迅速识别词的第三个因素是语境（梅耶和施万尼维尔，1971）。词出现在特定语境中容易识别些。这是符合感情认识的，因为语境当即把所能出现的词汇范围缩小，听话人可立刻到大脑词库中直奔特定范围，而不再考虑其他词汇。

2.4.1 有关大脑词库的研究对语言本质的揭示

1. 一切语言都有为数众多的词。本族语者也不能认识所有的

词，但对相当大的一部分词，他们有一种被动的知识（能够识别，知道其词义）。对一小部分词，他们则有一种主动的知识（能够实际运用）。

2. 词汇可分成为数甚少的功能词和为数众多的内容词。词义领域相同的内容词在大脑词库中储存在一起。

3. 词的出现频率不等。知道一种语言中的常见词汇（日常生活中用的内容词和语法词），知道自己研究领域中的常见词汇，再加上了解当时的语境，这三者可以帮助听话人理解自然口语。这是因为词的出现频率、词的近期出现和具体语境，都帮助缩小词的选择范围，使听话人较快地从大脑词库中提取有关词汇。

2.4.2 有关大脑词库的研究对语言教学的启示

1. 教授外语词汇时，教师应该考虑是否学生真的需要学习某个词，还要决定是让学生只学识别，还是同时学习使用。词汇教学要有选择。教什么词应该考虑该词是否属于常用词，是否是学习者将来要特别用到的词。

2. 如果词频、出现时间和语境都影响到从大脑词库中提取词汇的速度，那么只给学生一个词汇表和一两个例句的教授方法，似乎是不够的，还不足以使词汇如此容易地从大脑词库中提取。主要的生词，初步接触后，还要在今后的一段时间内经常出现在口语和书面语的各种语境之中。

3. 要给学生示范如何通过语境（上下文，主题，讲话人等情况）来辨别听错了的词。学习者不必听清每一个词才能听懂话语。语境能够指引他们从正确的方向去理解。

4. 既然词汇在大脑词库中是按语义领域分类储存的，教师和学生应知道这一点，并考虑教和学生词时应注意什么。例如，生词可按主题分组教授（如衣服，身体部位），或按意义（如表示走路的各种方式的词，描写人的相貌的词），或按词根和派生词，或按上

座标词和下座标词，或按同义词和反义词分组教授等等。只要引出生词时有一定的规律，总比仅仅提供一个互无关系的词汇表要好。

2.5 识别组成成分及其表达的命题

听话人通过声音识别词时，同时把词划分为组成成分。组成成分是指一句话中的一组词，它可以被某一个有同样句法功能的词所代替。例如：

1. “你的大衣在地板上”可改写为“它在那儿”。
2. “那些又好又红的苹果很贵”可改写为“它们很贵”。
3. “彼特的那位牙科医生马克喜欢苹果”可改写为“他喜欢它们”。

有时一个组成成分表达一个命题，有时表达两个或更多的命题，如例句2和3。无论一个组成成分表达几个命题，听话人这时同时要做两件事情：一是把识别出来的词划分为组成成分，二是立刻找出组成成分表达的命题，以及这些命题帮助构成的更大的全句命题。

解释听话人构建句子的字面意思所需的过程有两种理解。一种是派生理论或转换模式，另一种是句法和语义策略模式。下面分别介绍。

2.6 派生理论或转换模式

这种理论是米勒（1962）以乔姆斯基的转换语法为基础发展起来的。他认为，每一句话起初都有一个深层结构命题，其形式为一个简单陈述句。经过各种转换，这个命题可以用不同的表层结构表达出来。例如：

深层结构命题：

1. 佩吉爬了那座山。

可能的表层结构:

2. 那座山是佩吉爬的。

3. 那座山是佩吉爬的吗?

4. 那座山不是佩吉爬的吗?

按照这种理论,听话人听到第四句时,要进行一番逆向转换,回到深层结构命题(第一句),才能识别其表达的命题。

如果果真如此,每一个逆向转换都需要时间,理解第四句所需的时间就会长于二、三句所需的时间,因为它进行的逆向转换多一些。而实际上情况并非如此。听话人在语境中理解第四句和理解第一句似乎用同样的时间。

这种理论发展起来的时候,语言的描写是以形式为基础的(即结构主义观点)。人们不把语言看成是交流意图的手段或做事情的工具。所以,难怪这种模式没有考虑到人们讲话时选择某种表层结构、情态和语态都是有目的的。例如,选择被动语态是因为要把动作的对象作为句子的话题(上面第二句),或者因为他们对某事没有把握(如第三句),或者因为他们要强调施动者(如第四句)。因此,同一个命题,讲话人选择不同的表层结构是为了表达自己旨在传达的特殊意义。只要话语用于合适的语境,而不是孤零零的一句话,理解各种表层结构与理解最初的陈述句则同样迅速。这一理论很快就被放弃了。

2.6.1 派生理论的放弃对语言本质的揭示

1. 自然语言的产生不是在头脑中通过转换规则把深层结构的陈述性命题变为特定的表层结构形式,理解语言也不是逆向转换的过程。

2. 语言的使用是有目的的。讲话人可以用不同形式表达相同的命题;选择某种形式而不选择另一形式(如上面用第二句不用第四

句)，都是有一定原因的，即要达到特定的目的。

3. 听话人（或读者）在理解某句话时遇到的困难，不一定总与复杂的句子结构有关。

2.6.2 派生理论的放弃对语言教学的启示

1. 语言的产生和理解不是遵循一组一成不变的心理操作过程。使用语言时，人们不是仅仅在大脑中进行可以预示的几个转换。使用结构操练来教英语不能使学习者练习自然地运用语言。虽然这种操作练习有利于初步练习使用某些重要结构。但是，单是这种操练不足以使学习者能在实际生活中运用语言。

2. 教师判断听力或阅读材料的难易时，应该记住，结构复杂的句子，不一定就比结构简单的句子更难理解。他们应该考虑主题和内容的难易，以及思想表达的直接程度；只有字面意义的理解是否够用；是否需要挖掘第二层次的间接意义。句子结构复杂，但直接了当地谈论具体、熟悉的主题，理解起来也许较容易；句子结构简单，但主题深奥，拐弯抹角，理解起来也许更难些。

3. 学习者理解听力或阅读材料时，应该记住讲话人或作者是为了一定目的才使用语言的。他们要表达特定的意义。听话人或读者正是要发现这种目的和意义。

如果靠逆向转换回到最初深层结构的命题还得不出组成成分和命题的话，那么，听话人或读者如何去理解讲话人或作者的意义呢？

2.7 句法和语义策略模式

这种理论认为，听话人靠讲话人运用的全部句法和语义线索去识别组成成分和它们表达的所有命题或部分命题。

2.7.1 句法策略

柯拉克夫妇(1977)指出,听话人识别组成成分和它们表达的命题时,用的是语法知识。他们用这种知识把词结合成组成成分,并把没有听到的词填进去。但到底如何做呢?语法知识能提供什么线索呢?我们以英语为例介绍如下。

1. 如果学习者知道功能词的作用和大部分短语规则,听到一个词之后就可预测下一个词。例如:

- a. 如果听到一个限定词 (**a, the, some**等), 便可知道这是名词短语的一部分。

如果知道大部分短语规则, 便可知道: 一个名词短语很可能由限定词+(形容词)+(形容词)+名词来构成。所以, 如果有一部分没有听到, 便知道漏掉的部分是什么词类, 根据上下文, 还可以识别它应具有什么意义。

- b. 如果听到一个介词 (**to, at, in, on**等), 便可知道这是介词短语的一部分。介词短语一般由一个介词和一个名词短语构成。既然已经知道名词短语如何构成, 则可根据以上过程, 找出没有听到的部分的词类和意义。

2. 如果学习者知道语法和构词规则中的缀词法, 听错了一个词, 但听到了后缀, 仍然可以辨别该词的词类, 再根据语境辨别词义。例如:

- a. 如果听到...then they ___ ed it 或...it was ___ ing in the corner, 那很可能漏掉的是个动词。
- b. 如果听到... a ___ al invitation 或 ...she was the most ___ tive woman I have ever seen, 漏掉的一定是形容词。
- c. 如果听到...the ___ ation is completed 或 ... your ___ ness won't be forgotten, 漏掉的一定是个名词。
3. 某些内容词, 尤其是动词, 也能给前后应出现的词提供一些

线索。这种信息也能帮助学习者识别漏掉的词。例如:

- a. 诸如hit, catch一类的动词前后都会有一个名词短语, 如
They didn't catch the ball。
- b. 诸如give, buy之类的动词, 后面经常有两个名词短语, 第一个是有生命的, 第二个是具体的。如She gave the man an old coat。
- c. 像put这类动词, 前面有一个名词短语, 后面有两个名词短语, 其中一个是地点。如They put it on the floor。

2.7.1.1 句法策略对语言本质的揭示

1. 语言严格地受着规则的制约。只有某些词类才能构成组成成分, 词缀只能加于某些词类, 内容词、特别是动词, 前后出现什么词, 都有规则制约着。

2. 语言有许多语法冗余现象。就是说, 语法系统的许多方面, 如时态和单复数, 往往不只一次地被标记出来。例如, The cat lies in front of the fire 中, cat的单数性在名词和动词都有标记。

2.7.1.2 句法策略对语言教学的启示

1. 如果学习者使用句法策略, 要听懂别人的话, 他们必须知道语法规则, 特别是最规范的、用途最广的语法规则。熟练掌握最规则的句型, 最常用的组成成分, 以及这些成分中最普通的要素, 则是特别有益的。

2. 应该训练学生学会识别能够填充规范句子和句型空位中的词类。这样, 即使没有听到某一组成成分的某一部分, 也能利用句法框架构建出句子意义来。

3. 教授生词尤其是动词时, 应特别讲清它们的前后应该或不该出现什么语法项目。

4. 自然语言中的语法冗余现象应该尽早告诉学生, 这样他们可

以找出并利用冗余现象所提供的线索。（参见第四章中有关冗余现象的论述。）

5. 以上句法策略都要求学习者是积极的听话人，要利用一切句法信息去预示下一部分是什么，才能够识别没有听到的项目可能是什么结构。只有这样，再加上语义策略（见下文），他们才会判断出漏听部分的意义。

虽然句法线索是存在的，可惜的是这些线索常常来自功能词，而功能词是不重读的，在自然讲话中常常被“吞”掉。所以听话人还必须利用语义线索。

2.7.2 语义策略

在任何口头交际中，听话人很可能知道讲话人要说什么。这是因为听话人相信讲话人将遵循两条重要原则。

2.7.2.1 交际原则

1. 现实原则

按照现实原则，听话人相信讲话人正在讲的话自己是可以听懂的。既然听话人可以相信讲话人的话是有一定道理的，不是故意使自己迷惑不解，所以他们可以用有关语境的普通常识，帮助自己理解听到的话语。储存在长期记忆中的普通常识（见第三章）包括已经讲过的话，正谈论的话题，有关讲话人的情况，以及谈论的情景。所有这一切，都会帮助听话人理解话语。如果讲话人的话有歧义，听话人会根据语境作出正确理解。如果听话人听错了或没听见某一部分，他们也会断定该部分在语境中是合乎道理的。

2. 合作原则（格莱斯，1967）

合作原则让听话人相信讲话人：

- a. 在讲真话；
- b. 在提供足够的信息使人理解旨在传达的意义；

- c. 说的话与旨在传达的意义是切题的；
- d. 用尽可能清楚、简洁的方法表达意义。

两条原则都强调：在通常情况下，讲话人想要听话人听懂自己，而不是哄骗听话人；听话人可以相信讲话人在努力讲得合情合理。

讲话人显然希望听话人听懂他要表达的意思。费兰本（1973，1974）让受实验者听这样的话：

1. John dressed and had a bath.
2. John posted the article and then write it at its weekend.

之后，他让受实验者释义他们听到的话。60%的人把第一句写成John had a bath and got dressed。

费兰本问他们能否肯定这是他们听到的原话，60%的人中的一半说敢肯定。然后，费兰本指出他们写的句子与原句的差别，他们说他们知道讲话人的本意，所以才把正确的句子写出来。

2.7.2.2 利用语境

听话人一般可以相信讲话人想要他们听懂，但是他们仍需要搞清楚讲话人说的是什么。上面讲过，听话人还可以利用语境帮助理解。

1. 听话人可以利用讲话人已经说的话，帮助他们判断讲话人现在又指的是什么。例如：

讲话人：玛丽和乔治去年夏天爬了峨嵋山。

（听话人可以识别两个命题：一是峨嵋山是可以爬的；一是去年夏天玛丽和乔治爬了峨嵋山。）

讲话人：她给顶峰照了像，还收集了植物标本。

（听话人找出与第一句命题相联的词。）

2. 听话人可利用有关主题的非语言性知识（见第三章）帮助他们理解话语。勃兰斯福和约翰逊（1972）用实验证明了听话人了解

谈话主题是多么重要。他们让两组人听下面的短文（略有修改）。一组给了题目，另一组没有给题目。

（题目：洗衣服）

课文：实际上程序很简单。首先把东西分成不同的几堆。当然也许一堆就够了，要看需要做多少。如果你自己没有设备，需要去另一个地方，那就是第二步。你自己有的话，就可以开始了。每次宁肯少做些，也不要做得太多。从短期来看，这一点也许不重要，但是复杂情况可能发生，一出毛病就要花很多钱。一开始，整个程序看上去很复杂，不过很快就会变成日常生活中另一种事实。很难预示这项任务在不久的将来可以结束，但是也很难说。程序完成之后，再把东西分成几堆，然后放在合适的地方。迟早还需要用这些东西，整个程序又重复一遍。不过，这是生活的一部分。

知道题目的小组说课文相当容易理解，不知道题目的小组觉得课文相当难懂，而且记住的也少多了。

3. 听话人可以利用自己对讲话人的了解来理解对方的话。例如，对方说：“你好，我昨天刚回来。有什么消息吗？”如果听话人知道对方在国内出差三个星期，她离开时单位正要得到一份重要的出口订货单，听话人当然知道“有什么消息吗”是什么意思。

4. 在许多语言中，词序相当固定。词序也可以为听话人提供语义线索。例如：

a. 英语中的某些句型相当普遍，如：主语—动词—宾语，和主语—动词—宾语—宾语的句型常常这样表示：名词短语1+动词短语+名词短语2+名词短语3。听话人一般可以断定：名词短语1为施动者。动词短语是动作本身，名词短语2是受事者，名词短语3为宾语。

b. 英语中，叙述事件，发指示，指路，讲程序一般都按照应该发生的顺序或实际发生的顺序。例如：

I went there last night and climbed through the window

and found him asleep.

You turn right at the traffic lights, take the second on the left....

Clothes are sorted out into piles according to colour and then put into the machine, soap powder is added and

c. 英语中, 讲话人一般先讲与听话人共有的信息, 新的信息一般出现在句末。例如:

You know that book I mentioned last week, well, it's the one by Foss and Hakes.

2.7.2.3 语义策略对语言本质的揭示

1. 讲话人(或作者)使用语言是有目的的。他们想要听话人(或读者)理解他们的意思。很少有讲话人故意哄骗听话人, 把他们弄得不知所云。这一点听话人是可以相信的, 而且确实相信。

2. 双方交际的场景对听话人理解话语很有帮助。一生之中, 听话人在长期记忆中收集不少普通常识(见第三章)。这些知识有语言的, 也有非语言性的; 其中会包括有关以下方面的信息:

- 所用语言的发音系统, 语法规则, 词汇。
- 谈话的主题。
- 讲话人的情况。
- 谈话的场景对话语意义的影响。
- 语言使用者特有的文化因素。

这一切信息都是听话人能够用得上的, 以便帮助他们理解话语的字面意义。

3. 关于句子的语法规则和大于句子的语言单位的规则, 不仅告诉听话人哪些项目可以组成语法正确的句子, 而且包含这些项目之间的语义关系的信息。

2.7.2.4 语义策略对语言教学的启示

1. 既然语境对理解话语十分重要，教师应该在给学习者听力材料之前先把语境交待清楚。教师应告诉学习者材料的主题是什么，在什么情况下，谁在对谁讲话，这也正是听母语时他们都自然具备的知识。知道这些，他们可以在一定程度上预知讲话人要说的话，正象他们听母语时可以预知一样。

2. 前面讲过，讲话人是有一定目的的，听话人也是有目的的。所以，教师训练学习者的听力时也应该有一定的目的。一种办法就是在听到练习材料之前，就把听力问题或要完成的任务发给学习者。

3. 操任何语言的讲话人都旨在让别人听懂，通常都是想要听话人理解他们的话。听外语和听母语一样，听话人可以相信现实原则和合作原则是用得上的。听母语时，听错或漏掉一两个词，人们并不担心；听外语也是一样，用不着惊慌失措。可以给学习者示范一下：让他们听一篇简单材料，听之前把几个内容词抹掉，学习者会发现他们仍然能听懂。例如，在下面这份听力材料中，有五个内容词抹掉了，可能会有歧义。让学习者听到之前，先把这三个问题发给他们：

a. Where did the man/woman need to go?

b. Why?

c. Why couldn't (s)he get there?

短文：I went fishing down the river this morning and suddenly remembered that I need to go to the bank. I knew I'd have _____ if I ran along the bank to the city centre and then _____ the bridge. But I'd forgotten that the _____ was being repaired, so I couldn't get across there and so I reached the bank just too _____. So now I'm a bit short of _____, could you pay for the meal?

这个材料在中国学生中用过，他们基本上都能回答上面三个问

题。

4. 教授语法时，应给学生清楚地指出普通英语句型的含义，也应讲清语篇结构的普通特征和基本功能。

小结

本章主要讨论了以下几个问题：

1. 听话人要听懂别人的话，就要正确理解讲话人旨在表达的意义。据信，人们理解口头语言时可能有两个层次。在第一层次上，听话人理解话语的命题（字面意义）就足够了。有时字面意义不是真正要传达的意义。这时还需要在第二层次上理解间接的，暗含的意义。

2. 不论在哪一个层次上理解话语的意义，都要用到语言方面的知识（音系的、词汇的、句法的、语义的知识）和非语言方面的知识（情景知识，普通常识）。这些知识储存于长期记忆之中。

3. 为了使学习者能够用上非语言性知识，在听语言材料之前，有必要向他们提供有关谈话情景方面的情况。这种信息包括讲话人和听话人是谁，他们之间的关系，谈话发生在什么地方，讨论的话题是什么。

4. 讲话人是有目的的。听话人可以相信讲话人想要他们听懂自己的话。听话人也是有目的的。学习者在听外语之前，应该知道为什么要听一段材料。

5. 文字语言和口头语言是不完全相同的。如果用文字语言的语法准确性标准来衡量自然的、自发的口头语言，会发现口头语言有很多“错误”。实际上，这些“错误”是正常的。口语中经常出现的的不完整的句式，犹豫，重复等对听话人是有帮助的，因为这意味着不用听到每一个词就理解讲话人的意思。

6. 由于文字语言与口头语言十分不同，因此旨在用于阅读的文

字材料不适合用作听力材料。听力材料应该尽量包括许多不同的本族语者的声音和各种讲话风格，使学习者能够适应实际生活中的话语。

7. 任何语言中的词频都不相同。结构词和有关日常生活的内容和概念是最常见的。有关某个特殊研究领域的词，对某些人来说，也可能是常用词。任何语言使用者能够辨认的词要多些，能够主动运用的词要少些。教授外语词汇的时候，教师应该考虑这些词以后是否经常用到，是否需要主动地运用，还是只需要辨认就可以了。

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第三章 记忆与语言的理解

阅读本章之前，请先考虑如何回答下列问题：

1. 在记忆中储存的是什么信息？
 2. 长期记忆与短期记忆有什么区别？
 3. 记忆中的信息是有组织地储存还是杂乱无章地堆砌？
 4. 什么东西会影响人们听到或读到的语言信息？
 5. 人们听到或读到句子之后，最容易记住什么信息？
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前一章讲到，为了理解话语第一层次上的命题意义（字面意义），尤其是要理解第二层次上的间接的、旨在传达的意义，听话人需要用到储存在记忆中的信息。他们在短期记忆中找出第一层次上的字面意义。要做好这一点，听话人要运用有关语言词汇和结构的语言性信息，还要用到有关主题、讲话人和语境等非语言性信息。这两种信息都储存在长期记忆之中。过去收集的信息对理解现在情况是至关重要的。

本章将讨论长期记忆和短期记忆的容量及工作情况。虽然将继续从口头语言角度讨论语言的理解，但有些例证来自文字语言。整个讨论与理解语言的两种形式都有关系。

3.1 什么是记忆？

历史上，人们已经做过各种努力，试图具体地描写记忆，以探

讨论记忆中的信息是如何组织的。

从前，有人把记忆描写成蜡板或石板，就象在纸发明之前用来在上面写字的板子。当时认为，一生中的语言和非语言经历，每发生一件，就准确地刻在记忆之中。随着时间的推移，生活的磨难冲刷着早期的记忆形象；这些记忆逐渐暗淡，最后消失。

这种比喻显然是错误的，因为并不只是对最早的事情的记忆逐渐消失。许多人对很久以前发生的事情仍然记忆犹新，而上星期发生的事情或所说的话却忘得一干二净。

近来，又有人把记忆比做录音机。生活的经历每发生一次就录制一次。每当要回忆什么事情，就把记忆的磁带倒回合适的地方，便可找到所需要的事件。人们有可能忘掉某件事存储在磁带的什么地方，磁带也会磨损或缠结，这时记忆则会暗淡或消失。

这种比喻也欠妥当，因为录在磁带上的记忆只能按照事情发生的顺序去回忆。实际上，用记忆来帮助理解现在的时候，回忆起来的東西往往不仅是过去的一件事，而是选择了好几件事，有的发生于很久之前，有的则是近期发生的。

因此，对记忆信息的提取应该是灵活的，使我们寻找一件有关的记忆或一组相联系的记忆都十分方便。

理解（或产生）语言时，我们能很快地启用长期记忆中的知识。我们能够如此迅速地利用记忆中的知识来理解新的信息，就意味着长期记忆中的内容组织得井井有条。本章将讨论记忆中的信息是如何组织的，哪些因素决定着语言信息是否储存起来，以及记忆对我们理解（和产生）语言所起的作用。

3.2 理解口头语言时短期和长期记忆的作用

我们说过，在短期记忆中构建话语的意义时，听话人最后记住的是话语的字面意义（而不是实际用的词）。但是，由于短期记忆

的容量很有限，这种意义很快从短期记忆转移到长期记忆。

长期记忆储存意义的容量几乎是无限的。它存有学习者记住的以往的全部经历。其语言信息和非语言信息包括学习者的母语文化中的社会行为规范（包括语言行为规则），如果学习者还懂其他语言，也包括其他第二语言的行为规则。所懂语言的大脑词库，语法结构，发音规则等也都储存在长期记忆中。此外还有学习者所熟悉的主题，经常打交道的各类讲话人，以及经常遇到的交际场合。长期记忆象一个复杂的巨大仓库，盛着互相联系的、每天都被生活经历丰富着的知识。这一切，学习者识别话语的字面意义时都可以利用，理解第二层次上的间接意义时也能利用。正是长期记忆中储存的信息使听话人不仅能够正确理解讲话人的意图，而且能够作出切题的、得体的回答。下面是理解语言两层意义的简单例子。

场景：教室内。八点上课。八点教师准时走进教室。二十个学生中只有四个学生到了。天气晴朗、暖和。

对话：（1）教师：早晨好！今天天气不错。

（2）学生：早晨好！

（3）教师：（看看表）你们的表几点了？

（4）学生：其他同学马上就来。

要理解教师两句话的意思学生要做些什么呢？第一句直接了当。学生在短期记忆中便可找出其字面意义。字面意义符合当时的情景。长期记忆中的语言信息和非语言信息使学生理解字面意义：外面风和日暖，又是早晨，教师的话可以直接理解。学生知道不用再去寻找更深层的意义，所以针对字面意义作出回答。第三句就不那么直接了。学生理解了其字面意义之后，长期记忆中的有关世界和情景的知识告诉学生，第三句没有意义，因为教师当然清楚地知道几点了。这时必须用到长期记忆中其他非语言知识：如何时上课，学生应该在教师到来时进入教室，学生迟到教师会生气的，所以教师需要有人告诉他不用等太久。知道这一切，学生方可正确理想教

师的问题，其意义为“其他学生在哪里？”，作出切题、得体的回答。

所以说，理解话语时，字面意义是在短期记忆中推导出来的。短期记忆中的意义转移到长期记忆中去，而且：

1. 对照长期记忆中的知识，看是否符合当时的情景。

2. a. 如果符合，则接受字面意义；必要的话，字面意义则成为作出得体回答的基础，加入长期记忆中的其他信息。

b. 如果不符合，则检查长期记忆中的情景知识，以便推导出字面意义背后的间接意图。然后，把这第二层次上的意义作为回答的基础，并加入到长期记忆的知识中去。

下面详细讨论记忆的各部分。

3.3 短期记忆

为了发现短期记忆中储存的内容和储存方式，已有人做过许多实验。这些实验通常是叫人听一串字母、数字或者互不相联的词，然后立刻让他们回忆听到的东西。

要想知道短期记忆中储存着什么，最好你自己做如下实验，可以用英语或任何其他语言。找几个你认识的人做受实验者。实验步骤相当简单：

1. 给受实验者发一张白纸，一支铅笔或钢笔。告诉他们现在不许拿起笔。

2. 告诉他们，你将读出一串单位数；他们要认真听，记着的越多越好。

3. 读出9至10个单位数，如：1，7，4，9，2，6，3，8，2，5；用正常速度读出。

4. 读完后立刻让他们按照听到的顺序写出这些数字来。

5. 照以上办法读出一串字母，如：P，C，L，V，A，F，Z，

N, D, R; 让他们立刻按这个顺序写出字母。

6. 照以上办法再读一串互不相干的词, 如: 盒子, 天气, 长的, 笔, 小山, 之后, 脆的, 学习, 灰的; 还是让他们按顺序写出来。

7. 最后, 按上述办法读一串有联系的话语, 如: 夜晚刚刚来临, 她在家靠近炉子坐着, 等着电话响。

8. 把纸收上来, 看看每类项目中有多少是按**正确顺序**写下来的。

从前的实验表明, 大部分受实验者的短期记忆中能储存7-8个数字或字母, 约6个不相关联的词。如果听的是意义上有联系的词, 则可记忆许多词。这说明为什么在短期记忆中进行第一层次上的理解是可能的; 讲话人有一定的目的, 并想要听话人理解。所以他们讲起话来用一组一组的意义上有联系的词。听话人可在短期记忆中把这些词储存足够长的时间, 以便找出其字面意义。

3.3.1 有关短期记忆的研究对语言本质的揭示

语言的音和词, 如果孤零零地讲出来, 只具有非常简单的意义, 如“停”, “小心”。只有听话人知道这是对他们讲的, 这些词才具有旨在传达的意义。只有当词在意义上联起来成为短语和句子时, 大部分意义才能表达出来。使用语言时, 只发出代表词的音或符号不能使讲话人表达很多意思, 也不能被别人理解。只有当他们能够说出有意义联系的词串, 而且适合听话人能够理解的情景时, 才可以说他们能够使用这种语言了。

3.3.2 有关短期记忆的研究对语言教学的启示

1. 教授语言系统的孤立部分不能保证学习者将来能够把这些部分组织成具有意义的口头语言或文字语言。脱离语境地教授发音或词(如不把音放到词中去, 不把词放到句中去), 不太可能有什么

成效，学习者记不住所教的内容。

2. 要想让学习者记住，一切语言输入必须是有意义的。音必须在词中教，词应放在许多不同的句子语境中去教。

3.4 长期记忆

3.4.1 信息的种类

长期记忆中的信息是按“意义”储存的；“意义”是在生活经历中所理解的。生活经历的一大部分是与听到（或读到）的东西有密切关系的。据信，这种信息分为两种。第一种叫**事件信息**：即日常生活中发生的全部事实和事件，可以按时间顺序排起来。例如：

“我母亲出生于1920年。”

“1969年第一个人登上月球。”

“今天上午6点我离开她的家。”

第二种信息是对世界的了解，或前面提到的普通常识。这是关于世界的某些方面的事实或概括，与时间先后无关。例如：

“妇女生孩子。”

“太阳在西边落。”

“葬礼上不要开玩笑。”

我们不断经历着日常生活中的事件，不断与别人交往，于是这两种信息也就不断地丰富着。

3.4.2 长期记忆中的信息的组织结构

前面讲过，长期记忆中的信息是人们一生当中积累的语言信息和非语言信息。这可能会成为一个巨大的信息库。必须有一定的组织结构才能具有实用价值。现在讨论对长期记忆的组织结构的各种看法。

3.4.2.1 按程式组织

据信，人们关于世界上的普通物体和概念的知识是按“程式”组织起来的。程式是有关一个具体概念的知识总和。就拿“房子”这个概念来说，一提到它人们会在头脑中出现一幅图象，想到哪些概念与“房子”有联系：

一幢房子就是：

——一座建筑

——至少有一个门，一般有多个窗户

——有几个房间

——每个房间都有墙壁，天花板，至少有一个门

——此建筑一般是用稻草、木头、砖或石头做的

——是供人住的地方

——形状一般为方的或三角的，经常有一个三角房顶

——面积很少小于10平方米，一般不超过10000平方米

按照程式理论，在大多数人的长期记忆中，与“房子”有联系的知识包括以上列举的部分或全部信息。听到或谈到“房子”这个词，其他信息便可自动出现，随时可用。

布鲁尔和特里杨斯（1981）做了实验，证明程式是有心理现实性的。他们把受实验者一个一个地带到房间去，告诉每一个人那是实验者的**办公室**。他们让每一个人在房间里等一会儿，他们去检查一下前一个受实验者完成情况。30秒钟后又回来，把受实验者带到另一个房间，让他们写下在实验者办公室里看到的一切东西。布鲁尔相信，受实验者对房间里东西的记忆会受到自己的**办公室程式**的影响，会包括一个典型的办公室应该有的东西。30个受实验者中，29个记住了椅子，一张桌子和墙壁，这是对的。9人记得有书，其实没有；书是办公室程式中的典型概念。8人记得有个头颅，这是一般办公室没有的，但这里确实有。所以，他们的记忆看来真的受到办公室程式的影响，即期望看到什么会影响到记忆什么。

3.4.2.2 程式中的项目按自然范畴组织

程式中的项目，例如办公室程式中的“椅子”和“桌子”，并不是绝对的。在“椅子”这个范畴中，有的更典型些，有的不典型。从最典型的椅子到最不典型的椅子，人们对什么叫椅子的看法就越来越有分歧。

罗施（1973）让受实验者在一张1-7量表上标出一个范畴中的各种项目的典型性：1代表非常典型，7代表非常不典型。她发现，受实验者总是认为某些项目比其他项目更为典型。例如：

在1-7量表上的平均分数

范畴

鸟：	知更鸟1.1	鸡3.8
运动：	足球1.2	举重4.7
犯罪：	杀人1.0	流浪5.3
蔬菜：	胡萝卜1.1	芹菜3.8

罗施后来又做了一次实验（1977），她让受实验者用范畴名称造句子：“鸟”这一范畴出现的句子有：

“我听到一只鸟在我窗外噉噉喳喳地叫。”

“树枝上落着三只鸟。”

之后，罗施又用典型的和不太典型的类别成员代替了范畴概念，得到了下面的句子：

“我听到一只知更鸟在我窗外噉噉喳喳地叫。”

“我听到一只鸡在我窗外噉噉喳喳地叫。”

“有三只知更鸟在树枝上落着。”

“有三只鸡在树枝上落着。”

罗施把这些句子发给受实验者，让他们标示每句话有意义的程度。用典型类别成员造出的句子被认为更有意义，而用不典型的类别成员造出的句子被认为不太有意义。

这种实验说明，人们在记忆中储存关于不同范畴物体信息时，

最典型的范畴成员最容易被提取。一旦一种程式被激活，首先记起的是最典型的类别成员。

3.4.2.3 事件程式——事物摹本

正如普通概念和物体在记忆中按程式组织分类一样，也有人认为，日常生活中的事件（如去餐馆用餐，去电影院，逛市场）也按程式组织起来。这种程式通常包括一系列可以预示的行动，又称事物摹本；据说事物摹本也储存在记忆中。

鲍厄，布莱克和托纳（1979）做了实验来证明事物摹本是否存在。他们让32个受实验的美国人列出“去餐馆吃饭”中最重要的20个事件。虽然20人之中没有任何两份是完全一样的，但其中的重叠是可观的。下面是重复出现的事件：

走进餐馆

报出预定席位人的姓名

就座

点饮料

看食谱

讨论食谱

点菜

谈话

吃沙拉或喝汤

吃主餐

点甜食

付账

给小费

离开餐馆

不是黑体字的项目至少有48%的受实验者提到；黑体字的项目至少有73%的人提到。这就意味着，人们可能把日常生活中的事件

在长期记忆中组成事件程式。

3.4.2.4 长期记忆的信息组织对语言本质的揭示

通过处理和产生语言信息（和非语言信息）所获得的知识储存于长期记忆之中，大部分按意义的形式储存。储存方式不是随机的。凡是相互之间有联系的概念、物体和事件，都联系起来，储存在同一地方。这样查找起来比较方便，所以才有可能正常地理解和产生语言。

3.4.2.5 长期记忆的信息组织对语言教学的启示

1. 学习者应该知道，在其母语中，长期记忆里的语言知识和非语言性知识都是有系统地储存的。有些知识可以帮助他们理解和产生第二语言。

2. 学习第二语言新的知识时，要尽量与已经获得的知识联系起来。例如：学习新词时，要把它们与意义储存于同一程式的词联系起来。

3.4.3 长期记忆中对语言项目的记忆

不论长期记忆中的信息是如何组织的，有些经历和有些听到或谈到的东西比其他东西记得清楚些。那么，是什么因素决定着在长期记忆中记得清楚与否以及记忆时间长短呢？对语言项目记忆的研究表明，有两个因素十分重要。

1. 加工处理的深度。

这是指听话人（或读者）应该对语言输入做些什么。可用以下实验来加以说明：

鲍勃罗和鲍厄1969年的实验：

受实验者分为两组。每组都朗读几个句子。

如：The cow chased the rubber ball.

要求第一组读完句子后看ball是否拼写错了。

要求第二组读完句子后识别ball在语境中的意义。

过了一段时间，告诉受实验者他们在参加一项实验。给他们提供句中的第一个名词（如cow），让他们回忆句中的第二个名词。第一组人只回忆起18%，而第二组人回忆起48%，因为他们曾研究过这个词的意义。

鲍勃罗和鲍厄1969年还做了一项实验。这次他们让受实验者记忆简单的主谓宾式的句子（如The hunter shot the tiger）。研究者把现成的句子发给第一组。发给第二组的只是两个名词，让他们自己造出有意义的句子。过了一些时候，给他们提示第一个名词，让他们回忆第二个名词。第一组的答对率是29%。第二组的答对率是58%，因为他们一直在思考两个名词的意义及它们之间的关系，所以对材料加工比较深。

海德和詹金斯（1973）也做了实验。他们让受实验者听24个词，每三秒钟听一个。告诉第一组听完之后要辨认词中是否有e和g两个字母。告诉第二组一边听一边判断该词是否悦耳。每组中，有一半人知道实验的目的是要记住这些词，另一半不知道。听完之后，让他们回忆听到的词。回忆结果如下：

	查字母（第一组）	悦耳性（第二组）
知道要记词的	43%	69%
不知道要记词的	39%	68%

可以看出，有意识地去记住听到的东西并没有多大影响，而如何加工处理材料才是重要的。

以上实验说明，听（或读）语言时，越是把精力集中于语言的意义，而不是语言的形式，就越有可能记住所听到（读到）的内容。如果教师只让学习者注意形式，象以上实验中的第一组，那么，一旦大脑词库或结构规则经过查找之后，就再也不用把理解过程向前推进了。另一方面，如果学习者要识别意义，就要把理解过

程进行到底，至少要完成第一层次上的理解。所以，第一层次的意义被转移到长期记忆中，在那里保存起来，以后回忆时就更方便。

2. 对语言输入的兴趣或牵连。

这是指听话人（或读者）对所听到（读到）的东西是否有感情。有两个实验可说明这种观点。

洛特和沃尔什（1970）在实验中发给受实验者几个有名人物的名字，每个名字旁边有三个毫无意义的字母。例如：

里根ZBY 撒切尔TLG 戈尔巴乔夫JQS 萨达姆UCM

然后问他们喜欢谁，不喜欢谁，或对谁无所谓。之后，再发给他们这几个人的名字，让他们回忆每个名字旁边的那三个字母。结果发现，对他们喜欢的人，旁边的字母记得最清楚。对无所谓的人，旁边的字母记得最差。

克伦史密斯和开普兰（1963）在实验中让受实验者记忆一串对子：就是一个词和一个数字。词分两种：

带有感情色彩的词：如钱，恨，爱，荡妇

不带感情色彩的词：如白的，水塘，鞋子，浆果

受实验者对每个词的反应都用电子仪器测量过，以便决定哪个词是有感情色彩的，哪个词是中性的。看到词和所附的数字之后，提一个词让他们回忆所附的数字。实验结果如下：

——立刻回忆：中性词后面的数字记忆得好些

——20分钟之后：两种词后面的数字记忆一样

——45分钟之后：有感情色彩的词后面的数字记忆得好三倍

——一周之后：对有感情色彩的词后面的数字记忆同45分钟后的结果一样；中性词后面的数字全忘了。

这些实验表明，对某一主题的个人兴趣和感情上的牵连影响一个人对主题的记忆。

有关加工深度和个人牵连的研究对语言教学的启示：

1. 集中注意语言的意义，而不是只注意形式时，人们记得更

好些。教师教授词汇或语法规则时，应该讲清它们的意义。教师教词汇和学生学词汇时，都应放到语境中去教和学。教语法规则时应放在经常出现的语境中去教，不应只注意结构练习而把句子意义放在次要地位。

2. 如果个人兴趣会影响人们的记忆，那么教师应努力发现学习者对什么可能有兴趣，可能会参加进去。当然，在许多情况下教师不能选择自己的教材，这时教师应考虑是否可以改变一下教授已有教材的方法。在泛读课、听力课和作文课上，教师在选择材料上有较多的自由，完全能够使教材适合学生的兴趣和需要。

3.5 记忆和长段语言

到目前为止，以上讨论一直设想人们每次只讲一句话。当然实际情况不完全是这样。听（或读、说、写）一种语言，往往要对付连续的好几句话。

较长的语段通过短期记忆进入长期记忆时，先理解了的话语就变成了信息，其中一部分可用来理解下面的话语。理解了较长的语段的字面意义（命题）有时可以促使听话人（或读者）按照后来出现的命题重新评估对前面的命题的理解。这样可以用听到（或读到）的语言的全部意义，建立起“整体表达”。这种整体表达的基础是讲话人（或作者）提供的全部语言的字面意义，再加上听话人（或读者）用普通常识推导出来的最后意义。下面是一段示范性课文（根据柯拉克夫妇1977年改编），它说明要建立准确的“整体表达”，第二语言知识和普通常识都是需要的。

“两人走近站在屋子前面的那个人，他们紧张地互相看了一眼。他们对他们讲了大约十分钟的话，声音很大，全屋里人都能听见。他把事先交给他的两件东西给了他们，每人一个。他们互相把东西戴到对方的无名指上。他又说了几句话，仪式就结束了。她擦

起面纱，两人接了吻，转过身来，挎着胳膊走了出去，其他人跟在后面。”

熟悉西方文化的人都会看出，文章描写的是西方婚礼，虽然文章并没有明说。通过越来越多的证据，再用上普通常识，读者能够重新理解前面的句子，使其与最后的整体意义相一致。结果就可以推断站在前面的那个人可能是牧师或负责结婚仪式的文职官员，那两个人是新郎和新娘，给他们的那两件东西是戒指。以后，如果问到读者他读了什么，他可能分不清哪是文章里写到的，哪是自己建立的整体意义。留在长期记忆中的是构建起来的意义，不是实际听到或读到的文字。

金施（1973，1976）做了两次实验，看读者读完材料后实际记住的是什麼。他想证实这种观点：较长的段落包含着命题的等级系统。他的意思是，在某些段落中，一个或多个命题对整体意义是至关重要的，而其他命题是边缘性的，次要的。他想看看，人们记住的东西是否随着段落命题的多少而变化，是否与命题的“位置”有关。发给受实验者许多段落，少的只有两个命题，多的达22个命题；有的只有7个词，最长的有58个词。让受实验者默读，读完后立刻按电钮。然后让他们尽量回忆阅读的材料。金施使用的材料之一如下：

“罗姆拉斯，传说中的罗马缔造者，强行占有了沙宾斯的妇女。”

- a. 主要命题（即主要意义）：罗姆拉斯强行占有了妇女。
- b-d中的命题都是次要命题，使主要命题具体化：
- b. 罗姆拉斯缔造了罗马。
- c. 罗姆拉斯是传说中的人物。
- d. 妇女们是沙宾斯人。

金施发现，在他使用的诸如以上的材料中，阅读之后最容易回忆的是中心的或主要的命题，即主要意义。他认为，较长段落的整

体表达在记忆中组成一个等级系统，中心命题在系统中高于边缘命题。一个命题在等级系统中越高，就越容易准确地记忆。一个细节越是接近边缘，就越不容易准确地记忆。

3.5.1 长段语言的理解对语言本质的揭示

1. 听话人（或读者）得到的语言信息，不借助于长期记忆中的非语言性信息是无法理解的。同样，听话人变成讲话人要对前面的话语作出回答时，也要借助于非语言性信息才能作出切题的回答。所以，在任何语言使用中，把词汇、结构知识与普通常识结合起来是至关重要的。

2. 人们记住的语言信息作为意义储存起来。这些意义是人们从听到（或读到）的实际语言与长期记忆的知识中推导出来的。最后建造出的整体表达代表着他们认为听到的（或读到的）语言是什么意思。如果事后让他们回忆，他们会发现，无论在意义上还是在形式上，他们的复述并不完全符合实际听到（或读到）的语言。

3. 人们记得最清楚的是听到（或读到）的主要意义，一般记不住细节，除非花些时间去记忆它们。

3.5.2 长段语言的理解对语言教学的启示

1. 既然记忆中的非语言性信息对语言运用的一切方面都如此重要，在学习者参加的任何学习活动中，就应该给他们尽量提供使用语言的情景。这样才能够激活更多的非语言性知识，帮助他们理解或产生语言信息。还应该让他们认识到，他们已经具备了的有关世界的知识和人间苍桑的知识。提供语言情景的方法有：

a. 开始语言活动之前，用一点时间讨论可能会出现什么主题以及学生对主题的了解。

b. 讨论语言使用的场合，在这种场合中一般会发生什么事——什么样的人，会谈论什么事，谈话方式如何。要鼓励学生运用本族

文化去理解外语的输入。

2. 在短期记忆中短暂停留的和在长期记忆中永久储存的都是意义。语言总是用来表达意义的，用于一定目的的。在任何听力（或阅读）活动中，学生一定要有明确的目的。开始之前，他们一定要知道为什么要听（或读）某种材料。

3. 如果人们记忆最清楚的是听到（读到）的主要意义，那就意味着人们理解口头（或文字）语言时，是把所有的单个的命题（字面意义）集合在一起，构建成一个总的整体意义。在语言课堂上进行听（或读）的训练时，应该从一开始就鼓励学习者去学着这样做，即寻找整体表达的意义。附着在主要意义上的细节可以放在以后再查找，如果细节问题是有趣的或相关的。

小结

本章主要讲了以下问题：

1. 人们储存在长期记忆中的信息种类和数量，因人的生活经历不同而不同。长期记忆中的语言知识和非语言性知识，对理解和产生语言都是至关重要的。

2. 短期记忆的容量是很有限的。它能记得最多的是有意义的语言序列。长期记忆的容量似乎是无限的。它储存的信息可分为事件信息——按照时间、实际发生的事情和普通常识——在生活经历中获取的有关世界的知识。与母语和第二语言有关的语言知识是一个人的普通常识的一部分。

3. 为了使用方便，长期记忆中的信息必须有一定的组织系统。据说，关于世界上的普通物体和概念（如“房子”和“教育”）的知识组织成各种程式。程式中的项目（如“家具”）则按照自然范畴组织起来。在每一范畴之内，一个项目的不同实例中，有的十分典型，有的不太典型。关于日常生活事件（如“去逛市场”，“去

电影院”）的知识则组织成事件程式，又称事物摹本。有关程式、自然范畴、事物摹本等知识，在不同的文化中人们的理解也有差别。

4. 语言信息记忆的好与坏，似乎受到两个因素的影响：

- a. 加工处理语言输入时是否以寻找意义为主。
- b. 听话人(或读者)是否对语言输入的主题有兴趣或有牵连。

要求学习者参与的任何听力(或阅读)活动都应该涉及理解材料的意义，而且材料的主题尽可能地引起学习者的兴趣或使他们参加进去。

5. 听(或读)的材料一般包含多个句子。这种较长的语言片段在短期记忆中处理，按其出现的顺序一一加工。靠近语言片段开头的命题首先处理，其字面意义则转移到长期记忆。这种字面意义便成了用来处理后面命题的知识的一部分。有的时候，后来听到(或阅读到)的东西似乎与前面已经理解的命题不太一致。这时，听话人(读者)必须调整对先前话语的理解，把后来表达的意义考虑进去。在大部分较长语段中，有一个或多个命题对整体意义是关键的，其他命题不那么重要。表达主要意义的命题最容易记住。这就意味着，教师布置听力或阅读任务时，就首先让学生识别主要意义。一旦理解了主要意义，再让他们去注意更具体的信息。

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第四章 文字语言的理解

阅读本章之前，请先考虑如何回答下列问题：

1. 造成一篇文字材料或难或易的因素是什么？对这个问题的回答对选择外语阅读教材有什么启示？
 2. 语言中的“冗余”现象是什么意思？冗余现象如何帮助读者理解文字语言？
 3. 是什么决定着人们如何阅读不同的文字材料（如报纸，时刻表，教科书，小说）？对这个问题的回答对外语阅读教学有什么启示？
 4. 有这种可能：一篇文章的词汇都读得懂，但整篇文章的意思却看不懂。这是为什么呢？这对外语阅读教学有什么启示？
 5. 读者说他们“理解”某篇文章时是什么意思？
 6. 为什么预示一篇文章的内容有助于更有效地阅读？
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-

前两章讨论了有关理解和记忆口头语言的研究。我们讲过，适用于口头语言的观察大都也适用于文字语言。本章讨论的内容也是如此。长期记忆中帮助我们理解口头语言的信息大部分也能帮助我们理解文字材料。

4.1 什么是阅读？

阅读是一个心理语言学过程。读者一开始接触的是作者选择的

一串语言符号，来代表作者要表达的思想。阅读结束时，读者理解了与自己有关的那一部分旨在传达的意义。所以说是作者把意义变成语言，读者又把语言转换成意义。

4.2 有什么信息帮助读者理解语言？

按照史密斯（1985）的说法，为了解语言，读者必须利用直观信息和非直观信息。史密斯说的直观信息是指纸上的文字符号（词汇）。要使文字符号进入大脑加工，必须满足两个客观条件。读者必须睁着眼睛；必须有充足的光线。

此外，要想使直观信息有意义，读者还需要有非直观信息。非直观信息包括对文章所用语言的结构和词汇的了解，对所论主题的了解，和一定的阅历（普通常识，程式等）。前面讲过，这种知识储存于长期记忆。

总之，阅读需要有直观信息，即眼睛看得见的信息，只有眼睛看得见文章才有这种信息；还需要非直观信息，这是已储存在长期记忆中的信息，随时可以帮助我们理解直观信息。

在阅读过程中，读者已有的非直观信息量决定着大脑理解直观信息的难易程度。如，读一遍下面三段文字，看哪一段最容易：

- a) Many students study English only because they have to! English is part of the school curriculum because a decision has been taken by someone in authority that it should be so.
- b) In the first example, a carbon anion is formed that is stabilized by resonance (electrons delocalized over the carbonyl group and the α carbon atom). In the second case, a carbon atom is formed that is stabilized by the electron withdrawing inductive effect of the three chlo-

rines.

- c) Cavorting in the vicinity of the residential area populated by those of a piscatorial avocation, the miniscule crustacean was enmeshed in a reticulated object with interstices between the intersections.

本书大部分读者会发现，三段文字中第一段最容易理解。这是每段中的直观信息与非直观信息之间的关系所造成的。从句法结构的复杂程度来说，第一段与第二段没有什么区别。第二段之所以难懂是因为有些科技方面的专门术语，非科技人员不太可能知道。第三段的意义其实很简单，但其句子结构复杂，再加上有些不常用的词，使之很难理解。（意为：小蚱游泳的地方有许多人在打鱼，结果被网子捉住了。）本书的多数读者从事语言教学，所以他们对第一段的非直观信息（关于主题的知识）多于其他两段。非直观信息越多，就越是不要依赖直观信息。

反之亦然。试想，儿童刚刚学习阅读母语时，或初学者用外语阅读时，都十分困难。这是因为他们的非直观信息太少。本族儿童的长期记忆中对语言的接触甚少，又没有生活经验，所以没有什么非直观信息可以利用。外语学习者，即使是有许多普通常识、对主题又很了解的成人，对外语的结构和词汇了解甚少，所以不能利用他们的生活经验帮助他们理解外语课文。这两种人都主要依靠直观信息，正象他们读上面的第二段和第三段文字一样。这样读起来速度很慢，效果不好。

4.2.1 冗余现象的作用

读者和听话人一样，都受益于自然语言的一种特征，那就是冗余现象。冗余现象是指一切语言中的口语或笔语所包含的那些不十分必要的信息。冗余现象提供许多额外信息，能使有经验的读者激化自己的非直观信息，也就等于为文章的意义提供了额外的信

息。

所以，一个有经验的读者主动运用冗余现象所提供的直观信息去理解文章，正象一个有经验的听话人利用句法策略和语义策略去构建口头语言的意义一样。这种额外信息存在于三个层次上：

1. 正字法层次：语言的字母以及什么字母可以结合成词的规则。在这一层次上，读者需要尽快辨别一组字母是否构成一个词，然后在大脑词库中去识别这个词。研究表明，在特定时间内，能够识别出构成词的字母数，多于不能构成词的字母数，例如，*alligator/rllaagtio*，它们包含的字母完全一样，但前一个是一个词，很快识别出来，后一个不是一个词，较难辨认。熟练的读者，词汇量大，会利用他们的外语拼法知识迅速地识别文章中构成词的字母组合。他们常常发现，词中的某些字母似乎是多余的，还没有见到全部字母就已经把词认出来了。读起来就象这样：*They will not find it necess... to read right to the en... of eve... word.*（他们不用每个词都读到末尾）。

2. 句法和语义层次：语言的语法规则和语义环境——词和句所在的位置。下面一段文字可以清楚地说明读者可利用的冗余现象很多：

Then we *slooshied* the sirens and knew the *millicents* were coming with *pooshkas* pushing out of the police auto-windows at the ready. That little weepy *devotchka* had told them, there being a box for calling the *rozzes* not too far behind the building.

其中的斜体词都不是英语词，但可以成为英语词，因为它们并不违反英语的拼写规则。请先看句法冗余现象能给我们提供什么信息：

Slooshied: 前面是代词“我们”，结尾是-ed，所以这是个动词。时态是过去时，因为有-ed结尾，而且下一个

动词“知道”也是用的过去时。

millicents: 前面有定冠词，后面是动词；所以这是个名词；而且是复数名词，因为以-s结尾，后面的动词也是复数形式……

在每一点上，都不止一个句法线索帮助我们识别生疏词的词类，动词的时态，名词的数。口头语言和文字语言都是这样。下面再看语义冗余现象提供的信息：

slooshied: 后面的名词“汽笛”是有声音的；**slooshied**之后就on知道有什么要来了，所以此词的意思可能是“听见”。

millicents: 是指听到汽笛之后就会来的人，诸如警察，消防队，救护车等。文中后来提到警察，但没有提到车祸和火灾，所以意为警察或士兵之类的人。

当然，进行以上分析的前提之一是读者知道“汽笛”一词，而且熟悉汽笛使用的场合。

总之，如果文章中的直观信息与长期记忆中的非直观信息结合起来，可以缩小一个生疏语言项目的意义范围。

据估计，一篇关于非专业性主题的普通英语文章中，五个词当中可以去掉一个，文章仍然能被理解。完形测试的基础正是这种观点：有经验的外语读者可以利用文章中的一切线索，仍然能够对文章有足够的理解，把它正确地重新构建出来。

4.2.2 直观信息和非直观信息的结合以及冗余现象对语言本质有什么揭示？

1. 文字语言能产生意义是因为读者能够把直观信息（纸上的字母，词，句子）与非直观信息（长期记忆中语言结构知识，对主题的了解，对世界的了解）联系起来。所以可能有这种情况：一篇文章的词都能看懂，但由于缺乏非直观信息，都不知道表达的是什么

意思。（上文中关于科学的第二段文字和关于打鱼的第三段文字就属这种情况，下面还有类似段落。）

2. 文章作者应该清楚地知道他们的读者可能是什么样的人。这样能帮助他们判断应该提供多少直观信息，能够期望读者长期记忆中的非直观信息起多大作用。

3. 口头语言和文字语言都有冗余现象，都为理解语言提供额外的信息。有经验的读者能够利用这种额外信息，帮助他们理解文章的意义。

4. 阅读不是被动的过程。有经验的读者总是一边阅读，一边利用冗余现象和直观、非直观信息所提供的语境，来预示文章下一部分可能表达什么意义。

4.2.3 直观信息和非直观信息的结合以及冗余现象对语言教学有什么启示？

1. 非直观信息对读者理解文字材料十分重要。教师选择外语课文时应该考虑到学习者可能具备哪些非直观信息。前面讲过，初学者和年轻的学习者的非直观信息很少，给他们的阅读材料应该以熟悉的、日常生活中的具体主题为基础，或者课文的背景是母语中的背景。这样，学习者才有可能利用其有限的非直观信息。这样做会让他们从一开始就认识到，用外语阅读时，他们也有非直观信息来帮助他们理解。高年级的学生或年纪大的学生具有更多的非直观信息：有更多的外语语法知识和词汇，生活经验也较为丰富。所以他们能够对付有关各种题目的各种文字材料。

2. 即使是初学外语的人（在中国一般为13-14岁）也具有一些帮助他们理解文字语言的非直观信息。例如，他们对世界，科学，地理，历史等都有所了解。他们也有关于在不同的母语场合人们如何行事的文化知识。学习者的年龄越大，具有的非直观信息就越多。教师的作用之一是让学习者知道，他们具有这种知识，可以利

用这种知识去理解文字（或口头）语言，包括外语。

3. 要想利用冗余现象所提供的句法和正字法线索，学习者必须真正掌握拼法规则、构词法和语法。

4. 学习者有了这种结构知识之后，还应该给他们指出冗余现象的存在。应该尽快帮他们认识到，如果有一个词或短语看不懂，并不意味着他们将无法读懂整篇文章的意义。做法很简单：发给他们一些段落或句子，其中有些字母或词已被拿掉，让他们恢复原样，练习几次就会明白冗余现象确实存在。

4.3 人们到底如何阅读？眼睛和大脑的作用

人们用母语正常阅读时，眼睛看着文章，接收直观信息，送到大脑中去加工处理。不过，虽然眼睛始终是睁开的，它们只有一部分时间为大脑接收有用的信息。眼睛接收多少信息，取决于所读的文章类型和非直观信息量，即对文章结构和主题的了解。文章的结构或概念越是复杂，读者的非直观信息就越少，眼睛看一遍所能吸收的信息也就越少。

第三章中讲过，人们在短期记忆中能储存的信息取决于听到的是什么东西。（如果听到的是互不联系的声音，能记住的就少；如果听到的是有意思的相互联系的语段，记忆的信息就多些。）眼睛也是这种情况。它们能够吸收的信息量取决于读的是什么材料。有种仪器叫“即显即消器”，用来在屏幕上很短暂地显示字母或词。用即显即消器做的实验很说明问题。眼睛可以吸收并记住：

——4至5个随机选择的字母，如：p, b, m, x, h

——约12个字母长的互不相联的词，如：bottle, grow

——约25个字母长的有意义关系的词，如 The dogs chased the cats away.

所以，每读一遍，眼睛向大脑输送不等量的信息。大脑找出输入信息的意义需要时间。所需时间的长短取决于大脑要查阅多少可能存在的意义。因此，读者利用冗余现象和非直观信息去预示意义的的能力越小，大脑需要查阅的可能意义就越多，构建起正确意义所需用的时间就越长。举个简单例子：

如果告诉受实验者即显即消器将显示出英语字母表中的某一个字母，那么，当眼睛输送给大脑直观信息时，大脑要从26个字母中挑选一个。

如果告诉受实验者即显即消器将显示A和B两个字母中的一个，大脑只需从这两个中挑选一个。这时，识别直观信息的意义，要比考虑26种选择时迅速得多。

有经验的读者用母语正常阅读时，眼睛总是睁着的，但是只有一部分时间在接收信息。这是因为人们阅读时，眼睛并不在纸上始终如一地平平稳稳地移动，而是跳跃式地移动，叫飞快扫视。飞快扫视的目的是把眼睛从一个停顿走向另一个停顿；飞快扫视时看不到什么东西。每一个停顿叫做注视。只有在注视时眼睛才接收直观信息，并送入大脑加工。一旦大脑知道了这次注视中直观信息的意义，再一次飞快扫视就会发生，把眼睛移到下一个注视阶段。正常的有经验的阅读者每秒钟不能超过4至5次飞快扫视，也就是4至5次注视。

阅读中除了注视，还可以有回视。回视是指眼睛飞快向回扫视之后的停顿。出现回视是因为眼睛在两个注视之间移动得太远了，发现大脑不能理解输送的直观信息。为了理解文章的意义，需要退回到文章的某个地方，使其直观信息再次被理解。文章的直观信息越难（其原因可能是主题本身较难，表达的不够清楚，句子结构或词汇复杂），两次注视之间的距离就越小，读者就越有可能需要回视才能理解文意。

既然每秒钟能进行的注视和回视次数受到生理条件的限制，有

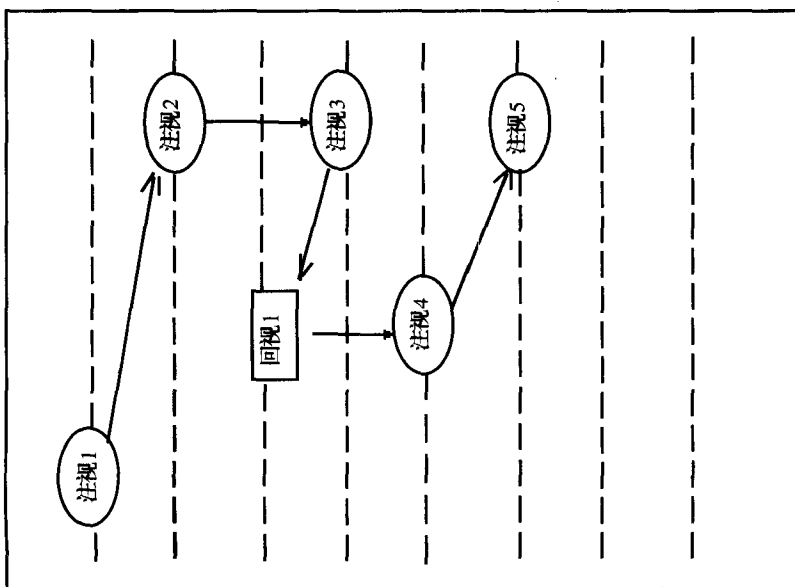


图3：容易的文章

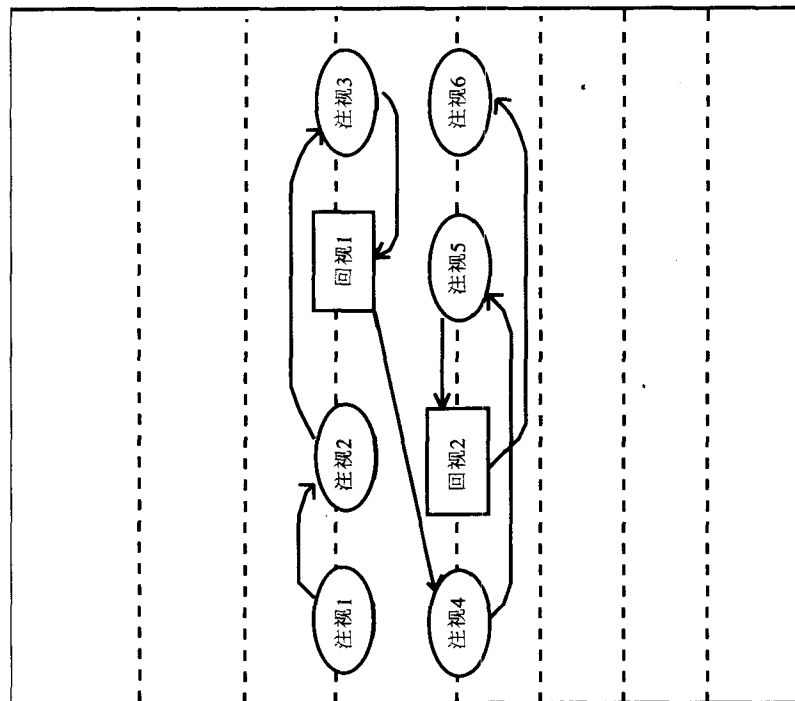


图4 较难的文章

经验的读者应该是每次注视吸收尽可能多的直观信息，而且能理解它。正常读者有选择地阅读。每次注视中，他们将其意义与已经理解的意义相比较，看在上下文中是否讲得通。然后再把眼睛移到尽可能远的地方，开始另一次注视。

图3中的文章较容易理解，读者首先移到第一次注视，理解之后又到了第二次注视。再次理解之后，发现其意义与第一次注视中的理解是一致的，于是把眼睛移到第三次注视。这次，他无法理解，因为向下移动得太远了。大脑告诉他进行反向的飞快扫视，在注视2和注视3之间进行回视，再次找出文章的意义。现在眼睛停在回视I上。一旦理解其意义，又把眼睛移到下一个注视）。图4中的文章比较难，注视之间十分紧密，读者几乎要读每一个词才能弄懂意思。

熟练的读者每次飞快扫视移动很远还能理解文章，不会丢失意义，用不着进行回视。这样的读者能够准确地判断，他们只要读文章的百分之几就能理解其意义。

4.3.1 阅读的生理过程对语言本质的揭示

1. 由于有经验的读者可以预示所读内容，大脑理解文章时需作的选择就少些，阅读速度也就快些。

2. 不论是哪种语言，读者从一次注视跳到另一次注视的距离取决于文章的主题内容和结构，非直观信息量的大小，以及需要理解文章的程度。阅读不同类型的文章有不同的办法，要注意的东西也不一样。如何阅读，首先取决于阅读的目的。例如，报纸上登的电影院的节目单，武打小说，学术论文，电影名星的风流韵事，小学课本等等，不同的人有不同的读法，目的也明显不同。这些不同类型的阅读中，出现的注视和回视也呈现不同的规律。

4.3.2 阅读的生理过程对语言教学的启示

1. 教师应训练学习者识别直观信息提供的一切语境线索；并在此基础上利用非直观信息预示下文可能出现的内容。这种训练使学习者学会减少大脑必须考虑的选择数目，从而成为快速读者。在激化自己的非直观信息方面，学习者也需要大量练习。教师应在课堂上采用一些方法帮助学生练习。可以参考以下两本书上的方法。两本书都有中文版：《发展阅读技能》和《教授外语阅读技能》。

2. 精读不太能反映自然阅读过程。教精读时对文章中的每个词的注意力几乎是一样的，不问其对整体意义的贡献大小。精读可能对教授语法规则、构词法、词汇等很有用处，但不能把学习者训练成有效率的阅读者。

3. 泛读中，教师要训练学习者利用冗余现象和非直观信息提供的线索，快速地阅读，有选择地阅读。要这样做，教师布置阅读作业时就要告诉学习者阅读的目的是什么，而且是在阅读之前告诉他们，而不是之后。这样他们阅读起来就会积极地寻找某种信息；这在阅读母语时是很自然的事，只不过现在是用外语。

4.4 阅读是为了形式还是为了意义？

人们普遍认为，阅读是为了解理解文章的意义，但是读者到底如何得出文章的意义，有三种不同的看法或模式。有人认为读者加工处理文字语言时采用“自下而上”的做法，有人认为是“自上而下”，还有人认为是“平行”的，或者称“交叉”的。

“自下而上”模式认为，读者是要一个个字母、一个个词、一个个句子地逐步处理，最后得出文章的意义；每一层次的加工完成之后，才能开始下一个层次。先得出每一部分的意义，最后才得出文章的整体意义。这种观点强调直观信息的重要性。

主张“自上而下”模式的人认为，读者首先利用有关世界的普通常识、语言知识和对主题的了解，理解整体意义，用语境来猜测

生疏项目的意义。之后，读者才仔细研究意义是如何表达的，如果这是阅读目的之一的話。这种观点认为非直观信息才是最重要的。

主张“平行处理”或“交叉”模式的人认为，读者既需要低层平面上的技能（识别字母和词）又需要高层平面上的知识（普通常识和对主题的了解），才能理解一篇文章。他们认为，读者几乎是同时利用各个层次上的知识/技能。识别直观信息之后，立刻用非直观信息加以处理和理解。帕利曾说：

“我认为……实际上各个层次是交叉的。读者首先识别有形的线索，但一旦有形线索识别之后，来自于语言知识和普通常识的程式立刻开始起作用。”（Parry, 1987）

读者到底如何读，谁都不能肯定。但是以上的讨论和下文提供的证据表明，“平行处理”或“交叉”模式似乎更有道理。

前面讲过，非直观信息在阅读过程中十分重要，因为它使读者能够用上自然语言中冗余现象提供的结构线索和语境线索。这种线索大都不是来自于一个词，而是来自周围的词赋予这个词的意义。这一点可以这样来证明：一句话中每一个词都读得懂，而整个句子的意义却不懂。例如：

Meaning for directly or later meaning and first form for read we whether about argument is there so, one become processes comprehension reading and listening where exactly unsure are people as just.

懂些英语的人大都能读懂上文中的每一个词，但整段的意思看不懂。这是因为每个词似乎与周围的词没有什么关系。如果你从后往前读，则可以理解整段的意思，因为那样一读每个词与周围的词有意义上的联系。这就充分表明，首先考虑文章整体的意思是很自然的，而不是先研究每个词的意思。

反对“自下而上”模式的另一个证据是考洛斯（1966年）做的

一个实验。他的受实验者是一组操英、法两种语言的人。他让他们朗读用英语和法语结合而写的有意义的段落。例如：

Aujourd'hui je am sitting avant mon desk. Dehors the
temps est lovely and chaud, mais there is a little vent and
les arbres sont moving.

他发现，朗读的时候他们随时把英法两种词互相代替，而自己还没有意识到；但整体的意义却没有改变。有人把英语词变成法语，有人把法语词变成英语；但不论怎样变，意思仍然保留。事后问他们朗读的是什么，他们都能准确地理解其意义，但说不出哪些词是法语词，哪些词是英语词。这再次表明，他们读的时候注意的是整段的意义，而不是每个单词的意义。

这样一讲，似乎“自上而下”模式比“自下而上”模式更有道理。但是，为了达到利用长期记忆中的非直观信息去“自上而下”地处理文章的这个阶段，首先还是要识别字母和它们代表的词。所以，优秀的读者首先迅速、准确地处理直观信息，然后利用非直观信息去理解它们。万·代克曾说：

“一再发现，区分优秀读者和平庸读者最好的办法是让他们识别简单的词和字母。”（Van Dijk and Kintsch, 1983: 23-24）如果是这样，某种形式的“平行处理”或“交叉”模式可能更准确一些。

4.4.1 阅读过程模式对语言本质的揭示

语言形式或结构的主要功能是表达作者（或讲话人）的旨在传达的意义。读者只有理解了语境中的形式，才能理解作者的意思。理解了结构错误的序列中的每一个词，不能保证读者可以理解整体意义。句中的词序规则和组织句子的语篇规则，对构建（或理解）有意义的语段是极为重要的。

4.4.2 阅读过程模式对语言教学的启示

1. 组词成句和组句成章的各种规则十分关键，它能使作者（讲话人）表达自己的意义，使读者（听话人）理解作者（讲话人）的意图。学习者需要了解普通句型中各组成成分之间的功能关系和语篇组织的种类。例如在主语+动词+状语和主语+动词+补语等句型中，主语与状语和主语与补语之间的意义关系。语篇的组织结构也要知道，如叙述和过程描写一般按时间先后顺序，以及这种文章中动态动词（使行为发生的动词）的重要性。只教授语法规则是不够的。教师还应该讲清规则具有的意义，并把它们放在经常出现的普通语境中说明其功能。

2. 除了能够迅速、正确地识别字母和词，还必须教给学习者尽可能地由低层过程“跳跃”到高层过程。一旦识别了词，学习者应利用全部非直观信息帮助理解文章的整体意义，无需一个词一个词地寻找其意义。

总之，学习者应该训练“自下而上”的词汇识别技能，又要训练“自上而下”的处理技能，后者更强调理解整体意义。

4.5 何谓“理解了文章的意义”？

人们从来不漫不经心地阅读，而总是有个目的，是为了寻找些什么。他们总是带着问题阅读，不论问题十分明确还是不够明确。理解了阅读的内容就找到了这些问题的答案。问题可以是各种各样的。比如说：

我真想知道今晚有什么电视节目。

昨天足球赛上谁得分了？

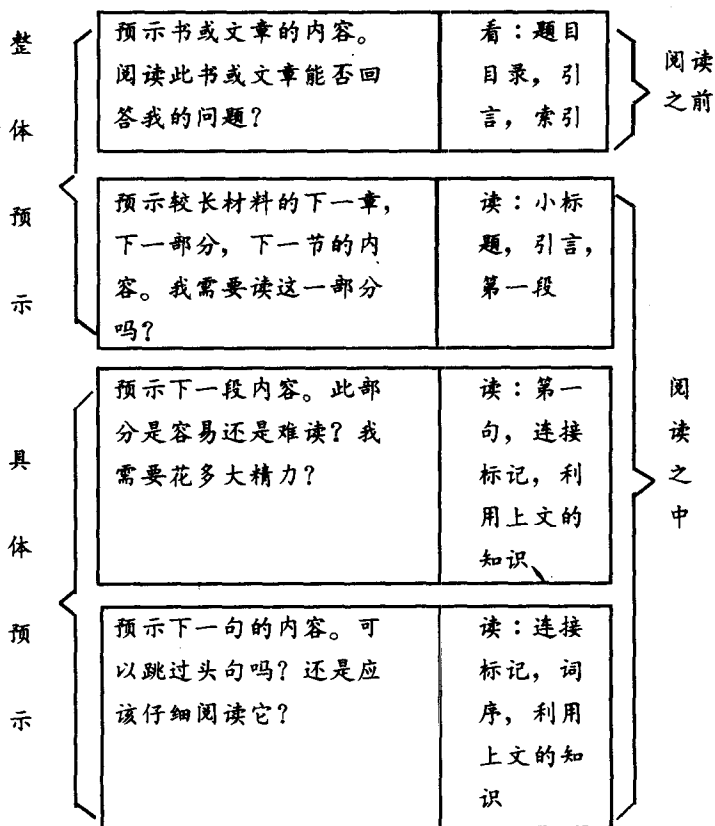
故事中后来发生了什么事？

“交际能力”是什么意思？

阅读时，人们寻找能回答这些问题的信息，因为正是为了回答这些问题才决定阅读的。

前面说过，正常的读者一般不是每一词都读。他们是要寻找自己的问题的答案，利用直观信息和非直观信息预示在文章的哪一部分可能会找到所需要的答案。这种预示在阅读母语时是很自然的，而且在文章的每一个层次上都有预示。见图5。

图5 阅读理解中的预示



在整体层次上，读者看一本书，一张报纸或一篇文章，从其题目，标题，介绍，引言，或目录中，便可知道它是否可能包含能回答自己的问题的内容。打开书，看看每章的题目和每节的标题便可知道答案很可能在哪一部分。在具体的层次上，读者可以根据上文读一读段落和句子，以及它们用的连接标记（如：“第二”，“结果”，“相比之后”等），从而可以判断它们是否能帮助回答自己的问题。

这种预示不一定总是自觉的。实际上，在阅读母语时，预示往往是自然而然地就出现了。不过，有效率的读者时时刻刻都在利用前文的内容和非直观信息，去预示下文的内容。这样，大脑理新的直观信息时只需考虑少量的意义选择，所以能够迅速、有效地理解意义。

4.5.1 阅读中预示的作用对语言本质的揭示

1. 一切作者（正如讲话人一样）使用语言都是有目的的。他们要向读者传达信息或思想。读者（正如听话人一样）利用语言知识和非语言性知识（非直观信息），去理解语言的形式和作者想通过形式来传达的意义。

2. 读者也总是有目的的。这种目的可以是一个明确的问题，需要通过阅读某种材料找到答案。阅读目的也可能不那么清楚，例如为了消遣、娱乐。读者对材料中的内容总是有些预料。他们利用这种预料（再加上利用长期记忆中的非直观信息所作的预示），可以判断某种材料能否回答他们的问题，是否需要阅读它，还是只需读其中的一部分；是要认真地读，还是只需粗略地读。

4.5.2 阅读中预示的作用对语言教学的启示

1. 如果阅读过程中预示如此重要，外语学习者应该：
 - a. 认识到读母语时他们确实预示下文，读外语也能预示下

文。

b. 阅读前和阅读中有预示方面的练习，来培养预示技能。

做法包括：

- 阅读前用题目和主题预示。
- 给学生文章的第一句，让他们预示下文。
- 给他们一段文字的第一句和最后一句，让他们预示中间的内容。
- 给他们一段或几段顺序打乱的句子，让他们复原。
- 把两篇文章的段落混在一起，让他们分开。
- 给他们完形测试式的文章去读。

在以上这些练习中，要让学习者解释他们是如何得出结论的，做最后决定时哪一部分非直观信息最重要。这样，他们会逐步养成自然而然地运用非直观信息的习惯，用它在外语阅读中进行预示，正如读母语时进行的预示一样。

2. 我们讲过，效率高的读者都先（至少在头脑中）提出问题，要回答这些问题就构成阅读的目的。不同类型的问题（即阅读目的）要求不同类型的阅读方式。例如：

- a. 如果问题十分具体，如“他们何时结的婚？”，那么读者只需找到能回答此问题的那一部分读一读即可。
- b. 如果问题是涉及全局性的，如“作者对主人公的态度如何？”，那就需要阅读全文，得出对作者态度的完整的印象。

有经验的读者会根据不同的问题自然而然地变换阅读方式。为了使学习者阅读外语象阅读母语一样，应该让他们阅读各种各样的文章，回答各种类型的问题。这样他们就能学会根据要回答的问题变换阅读方式。

3. 以往使用的阅读材料思考题总是放在最后，阅读目的性不强，阅读过程中也没有带着问题去思考。这样做不能判断学习者是

不是效率高的读者，也不能判断他们能否根据阅读目的变换阅读方式。

4. 在我国，教师若想训练学习者成为高效率的读者，就要考虑：

- a. 学习者将来阅读英语的目的是什么？为了消遣，为了受教育，还是为了做生意……？
- b. 他们将来可能需要阅读哪一类文章？小说，报告，学术论文和专著，贸易信函……？
- c. 如何训练他们为自己的目的而有效地阅读有关材料？需要强调哪种阅读技能？

阅读目的、阅读速度、理解深度之间的关系如何？他们是否需要熟练掌握以下技能：

查阅：读得很快；只需理解材料中的部分信息，无需阅读全文去寻找最重要信息。如：今晚9点有什么电视节目？

略阅：读得较快；识别文章种类，得出文章大意；需读全文，但不用细读。如：文章描写的什么过程？共几个步骤？

泛读（为整体理解）：不可读得太快；识别主题，作者的态度，作者的论证和观点的逻辑结构（有例子），能够简述主要内容。

精读（为分析和批判）：慢慢地、认真地阅读材料的许多部分；彻底理解，能够区分事实和观点，能够评论文体，能够写出全文的摘要或文艺批评的文章。

小结

本章主要讨论了：

1. 读者试图理解文章意义时要利用直观信息和非直观信息。读者的非直观信息越多（例如，所用语言的水平越高，对文章主题了

解得越多)，理解起来就越容易。

对大多数初学外语的人来说，非直观信息是关于世界的普通常识和母语文化。对于这种学习者来说，比较合适的课文是以母语文化为背景的文章，或者是关于日常生活的文章。

2. 冗余现象是：自然的口头语言和文字语言中包含多余的语言和非语言信息，即不属于理解语言必不可少的信息。冗余现象对读者有帮助，可提供额外的正字、句法和语义信息（就象句法和语义线索帮助听话人一样），这种信息可用来理解文章的生疏部分。

3. 在母语中人们用不同的方式阅读不同类型的文章。如何阅读取决于阅读目的。效率高的阅读者根据阅读目的变换阅读方式。应为学习者提供机会训练各种阅读方式。教师应为学习者提供各种类型的文章，并让他们为了不同的目的采用不同的阅读方式。

4. 完全有可能理解文章的每一个词，但不理解文章的整体意义。这就说明，每个词项的意义取决于它周围的词项。效率高的读者不是一个词一个词地建造意义。一旦他们识别了直观信息（字母和词），就会立刻利用前文的信息和对下文的预示去理解直观信息。

5. 人们阅读是有目的的。目的就是寻找对自觉或不自觉地提出的问题的答案。读者说他们“理解”了某种材料时，是说他们已经成功地回答了自己的问题，正是这些问题驱使他们去阅读的。

6. 预示可帮助人们阅读得更有效。阅读之前，利用题目、目录、介绍（或引言）进行的预示，可帮助读者决定某种材料是否能回答自己的问题。如果他们认为那种材料是合适的，这种事先的预示可以帮助他们“激活”关于文章内容的知识（如果有的话，这是其非直观信息的一部分）。阅读时，根据前文内容而进行的准确预示能够最大限度地扩大眼睛在注视之间移动的距离，而且可以缩小在每次注视中大脑需要考虑的意义选择范围。这样，阅读起来自然就快些。

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第五章 口头语言的产生

阅读本章之前，请先考虑如何回答下列问题：

1. 人们为什么互相说话？
 2. 说话之前，讲话人需要计划些什么？
 3. 有什么证据说明语言在句子层次以上还有结构？
 4. “错误”在口头语言中正常吗？
 5. 一个人讲话的流利程度受哪些因素的影响？
-
-

在心理语言中，对理解语言过程的研究远远多于对产生语言过程的研究。主要原因是，研究者研究理解时可以控制让受实验者记忆或理解的素材（即语言）。可以控制素材就可以检验对理解过程的假设。而研究语言的产生时，必须研究自然的语言运用，而不是人工控制的语言运用。不加控制时，研究者得到的素材便是受实验者随便说出的任何话语。虽然讲话的情景也可控制，但说出的话无法控制。所以关于语言是如何产生的，很难形成什么看法，也很难验证这些看法。

5.1 什么叫说话？

人们说话是为了对听话人有某种影响。讲话是有目的的。使用语言是为了做事情。就是说，人们用语言达到特定的目的，完成一定的功能，在听话人身上实现具体的影响。

例如：

<u>讲话人要做的事/完成的功能</u>	<u>讲话的目的/对听话人的影响</u>
陈述	给听话人提供未知信息
请求	让听话人做什么或停止做什么
许诺	为听话人或第三者做某事
警告	让听话人做什么或不做什么
道歉	让听话人知道讲话人对不起他
聊天	与听话人建立或维持友好关系

许多功能要达到的目的随着语境的变化而变化，所以上面列出的目的只是几种可能的目的之一。不论讲话人的目的如何，都必须经过两个过程才能把目的传达给听话人。第一，他们必须计划出准备说什么。第二，必须保证实际的讲话方式能使听话人理解其目的。

5.1.1 人们讲话的原因对语言本质的揭示

1. 人们讲话总是有目的的。

2. 人们谈论的事情一般不是在场者都已经知道的事情。讲话就会涉及传达或接收新的信息。

5.1.2 人们讲话的原因对语言教学的启示

如果教师想让学习者练习用语言自由交际，设计口语活动时必须记住以下几件事。要让学习者互相交谈时有一定的目的。这种目的往往涉及到传送或询问听话人或讲话人不知道的信息或看法。两人之间要有“信息距离”，活动本身就要使用外语来“接通”这个距离。设计口语活动时要有明确的目标或终点，这样学习者能够知道自己是否成功地完成了交际任务。

5.2 言语策划

讲话人要达到自己的目的就必须先在头脑中决定将讲什么，然后再实际讲出来。

把讲话分为策划阶段和计划实施并不完全准确。在任何一刹那，讲话人都可能既在策划又在讲话。如果不是这样，讲话人只能策划一句，讲出一句，再策划一句，又讲出一句，那么自然言语将会非常慢，且断断续续。而自然言语并非如此。通常人们讲话相当快，而且往往连续讲话，句与句之间也没有很长的间隔。所以很可能是这样：讲话人一边说着已经策划好的句子，一边同时策划下一步要说什么。这样才能使正常言语呈现流利的语流。

柯拉克夫妇（1977）说：策划过程有五个阶段：

1. **语篇计划**：在这第一阶段，讲话人需要确认，他们正在参与的是何种类型的语篇，这样策划起来才会得体。“语篇”是指将要加入的谈话类型。例如，是两个人交谈，还是讲故事，发布命令，描写一个人，作报告，正式演说，或者开玩笑？每一类型的语篇都有自己的结构特征，策划时必须体现这些特征（详见5.3节）。同一类型的语篇在不同语言中可能有不同的结构。讲话人要知道自己准备参与的语篇活动有什么结构规则，不论使用哪种语言。

2. **句子计划**：一旦讲话人断定了语篇类型，就需要计划表达自己的意义的句子。比如，每句话都要考虑以下问题：

- a. 句子的主语是谁或是什么？
- b. 讲话人要讲的话，对于听话人来说有多少是新的信息，可以期望听话人已经知道了什么？

在此基础上，讲话人可以决定自己应该讲多详细，能否使用“他”，“她”，“那里”，“那个”之类的指示词，还是必须都指出名字。

- c. 他们想直接还是间接表达自己的意图？

3. **组成成分计划**: 决定句子的形式之后, 讲话人就必须填充句子的每一个组成成分(如: 主语、谓语、宾语等)。这时他们要决定哪些词或短语放在句子的什么位置才能最准确地表达他们的意思。比如, 是要说“那男孩爬上树去”, 还是想说“那树被男孩爬过了”。这取决于讲话人要强调什么, 想在听话人身上起到什么作用。

4. **发音计划**: 讲话人选择具体的词填到句中的组成成分空位时; 这些词则转移到短期记忆储存起来。在短期记忆中它们用一系列的语音符号表达出来, 并标记出重读和语调, 准备实施计划的最后阶段。

5. **实际说话**: 讲话人准备好讲话了。大脑把信息发至口部和喉部的发音肌, 把短期记忆中表达出的音实际发出来。这一计划一实施, 旨在传达的意义就算说出来了。

图6表示了策划过程中的各个阶段。可以看出, 大部分阶段发生在长期记忆, 而且利用那里的信息。正像理解口头语言一样, 言语策划中的各个部分不是完全无关的, 而是相邻阶段互相重叠的一组过程。下面讨论图中标出的讲话人用外语策划自己的话语时的各个阶段。

讲话人有了讲话的打算, 有事要告诉听话人。在语篇计划层次上, 他们需要知道如何组织这种语篇才叫得体。什么样的结构才算得体, 也许因语言而异。所以讲话人要去查找长期记忆中的信息。他们需要查找有关情景、听话人和主题的非语言性信息, 还需要查找有关语篇组织结构的语言信息。这两种信息合起来帮助他们决定在他们即将发言的情景中什么语篇结构得体。

在句子计划层次上, 讲话人再次需要长期记忆中的语言信息和非语言性信息。他们要用对听话人的了解, 来断定听话人对他们要讲的话已经知道多少, 他们需要讲得多详细。如果讲话人想间接表达自己的意图, 还需要知道在这种语言中间接表达的规则是什么。

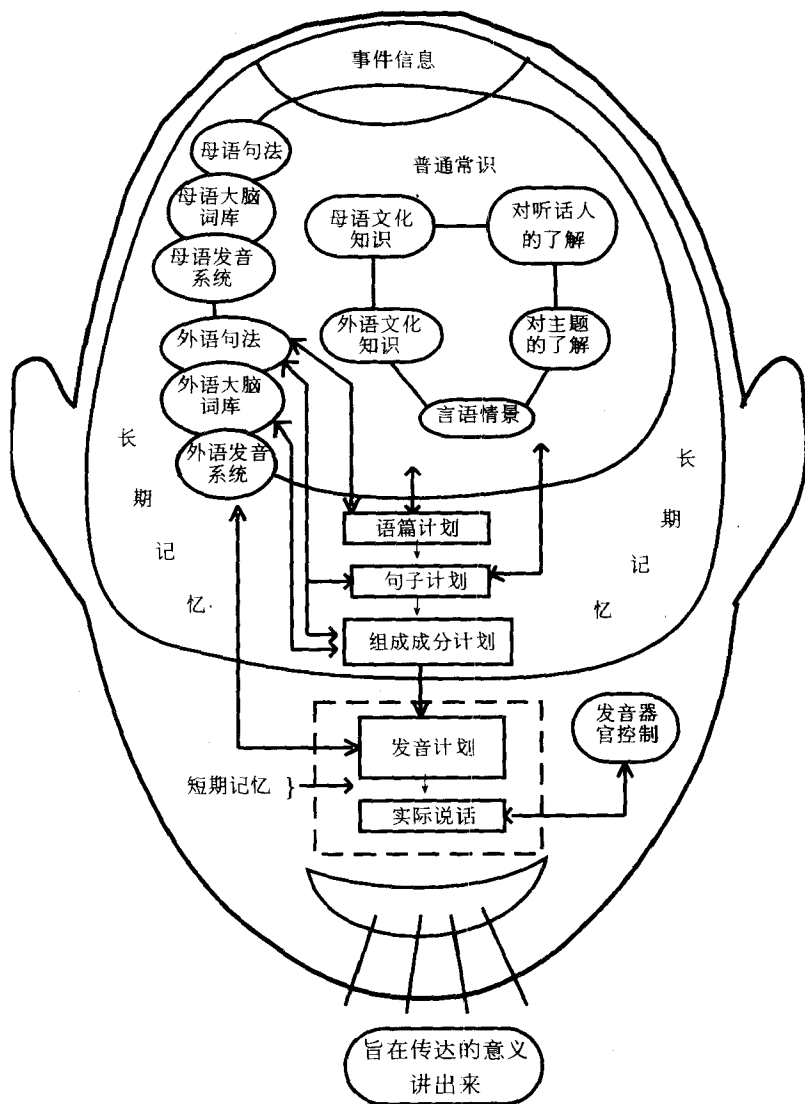


图6 讲第二语言时言语形成示意图

他们还要知道外语的句子结构和语序规则，也许还要用到大脑词库。

要完成发音计划，讲话人需要关于这种语言的发音知识。这种知识到底储存在何处，目前还不清楚。其中一部分可能与关于词的知识储存于大脑词库，也许专门有一个地方储存语音信息，其中包括该语言的节律特征的详细情况，如重读规则和语调规则。

最后，要把话实际讲出来，还要用于控制发音器官（喉部、声带、舌部、唇部等）的那一部分大脑。

谈话时，讲话人一边讲，一边监控听话人，有时需要根据听话人的反应来调整自己的话语。例如，如果听话人看上去已经听烦了，讲话人可以省略掉已经计划要说的一些细节；如果听话人似乎感到茫然，讲话人可能需要核实一下对方是否听懂所说的话，或重复一下已经说的话。

可以看出，要想进行有效的策划，有必要利用语言信息和非语言性信息。

下面将详细讨论策划过程中的两个主要阶段，语篇计划和句子计划，因为如何表达讲话人的意图，重大决定都是在这两个阶段做出的。

5.3 语篇计划

前面讲过，讲话人说的每一句话都要符合进行之中的语篇类型的特点：是在谈话，还是在讲故事，还是在上课……，表面看来，似乎这些语篇类型没有什么自己真正的结构，但是近年关于语篇分析、篇章分析和会话分析的研究表明，它们在不同程度上都有自己的结构，这就使人们想到，句子有句子的语法，以此用来断定某些词汇序列是不是正确句子；同样，很可能会发现要用语篇语法或篇章语法来描写句子平面以上的语段的组织结构，以断定某一篇文章是

否符合结构规则。

考虑语篇结构时，首先可以粗略地划分成对话和独白两大类。对话中，两个或多个人要协调他们的讲话，策划自己的话语时要注意前面别人刚说了什么。所以，事先策划自己的话语的可能性是有限的。独白中只涉及一个讲话人，事先策划自己的话语就比较容易，因为别人插话使自己不得不对已策划的话语做重大变更的可能性是很小的。

1. 先看对话。对话的最普通形式就是会话；会话表面上似乎没有什么组织结构可言。但是会话分析研究者主要对英语会话进行了研究，结果表明会话不是没有结构的。英语会话有自己的特征。一般会话由几个较短的来回组成，主题变化非常快，通常谈论的是参加者直接经历的或周围发生的事情；使用了很多非正式语言和日常套话。会话中，话轮替换是有严格规则的。例如，谁有权选择下一个说话者；沉默不能超过多长时间，否则人们会感到不舒服；谁有权打断谁的讲话等。会话有“开头”——引起旁人注意的各种办法（如，“今天天气真好！”）和表示自己愿意谈下去的办法（如：“你住在附近吗？”）。同样，会话也有“结尾”——讲话人示意会话可以结束了（如：“我们真的没有什么办法。”），或者讲话人表示会话必须终止了（如：“对不起，我得快走了，下周再见。”不遵循话轮替换的规则，或违反靠开头和结尾的规则，对方会注意到的。到目前为止，会话的结构才刚刚开始描写。但是人们普遍认为，任何语言中的会话都不是参加者随随便便地交换几句话了事。会话也是有规则的。这种规则可能会因语言的文化背景不同而各异，但是每种语言都有话轮替换规则，每次讲多少话，如何开始会话，如何自然地结束会话等规则。不然的话，就很难解释如下现象：即使两个人刚刚见面就谈起话来也是相当成功的。由于这些规则的存在（不论我们是否意识到其存在），会话时我们也能够在一定程度上策划自己的话语。

2. 再看独白。独白中有较大的事先策划的余地，因为讲话人用不着考虑其他人说了什么。但是，不同类型的独白在具体组织结构上有多大不同？谈论哪些语篇计划有现实意义呢？这方面的研究工作大都是以英语语篇为素材进行探讨的。这里主要讨论以下四种语篇。

A. 故事

篇章语法的创造大都基于故事的结构。故事一般都有极为重要的叙述成分：事件的先后顺序；人物出场和下场的先后顺序。拉姆哈特（1975）研究了故事的结构，并试图用树形图来表示篇章语法规则，就像传统描写语法学家用树形图表示句子一样。他认为，故事的结构由以下成分构成：

背景 + 一个（或多个）情节

背景：确定场景，说明故事发生的时间、地点、主要人物。

每一个情况有：一个或多个事件——即连续的几个行动，加上反应——即事件的内部反应和外部反应。

例如：（背景）很久很久以前，云南住着一个爱好和平的皇帝，他有一个非常漂亮的女儿。（情节）→（事件）有一天，一位信使来到王国，说一支大部队正在逼近，所到之处，一片凄凉。部队的首领是穿着一身黑装的巨人。（内部反应）皇帝担心女儿会遭不幸，（外部反应）便把她藏到一个深深的山洞里。

拉姆哈特的框架是故事结构的大致轮廓，可以适用于不少类型的英语故事。不按这种结构讲故事，会引起听众的注意，听起来别扭。如果英语是这样，可能用其他语言讲故事也有类似的结构。

B. 叙事、过程、指方向、发布命令

在这些语篇中顺序也很重要。一般是严格按照事件的顺序。比如要告诉听话人如何做某事，讲话人必须注意按正确顺序排列行动和完成行动的细致动作。告诉别人如何到达某个地方，也要按顺序讲清什么时间采取什么行动，在什么地方留心什么标记等。同样，

描写过程时，事件的顺序，过程中的每一阶段所起的作用，都要按其发生的先后顺序叙述清楚。这些语篇很可能在许多语言中呈现出相似的组织结构。

C. 学术报告或宣读论文时陈述观点、结论或建议

在讲英语的国家，做学术报告或宣读论文也有一种相当固定的模式。开始，先是总结一下前面已经有人讲的内容（也不是必须总结），或者说演讲者和听众聚在一起的目的。然后介绍报告的背景和为什么要作这一报告。然后是报告或论文的主体，讨论主题或情况，在合适的地方加些例证或示范。在此基础上得出结论或提出建议。最后，发言人简单总结一下内容和结论。

布利克（1991：106-107）曾说，在学术活动和贸易活动中，如何陈述自己的观点或提出建议，中国人和澳大利亚人有不同的看法。她发现，中澳双方都注意到对方的做法，而且感到不解。这就说明，汉语和英语确实都有自己的语篇结构规则，不遵循这种规则是会引起别人注意的。

D. 对人物、地点、物体的描写

这种描写象会话一样，似乎没有组织结构可言。讲话人完全可以决定描写什么，不描写什么，以及描写的先后顺序。有一个有趣的实验表明，人们进行描写时也遵循着一种十分相似的模式，至少某些类型的描写有种固定模式。林蒂和拉波夫（1975）向100个住在公寓式房子的纽约人提问“请您告诉我们您的公寓式房子的样式好吗？”为了描写自己的房子，他们至少要从三个方面策划一下应该说些什么。第一，描写房间的先后顺序；第二，对每个房间应给予的重视程度；第三，如何把一个房间与另一个房间联系起来。这三个变量可以使每个人的描写都不同于其他人的描写。然而，在100个实验对象中，竟然有97人的描写使用的是同样的结构方法。他们描写起来，就象带人参观房子一样，从大门开始，以大门结束，着重描写主要的房间（客厅、餐厅、厨房等），都对次要房间

(洗澡间、厕所)轻描淡写。这就表明似乎在描写性语言中也有习惯性的语篇结构模式,而且大部分人是遵循这种模式的。

不同语篇的结构性在程度上有所不同。很明显,一种语篇的结构模式越是严谨,就越是不需要事先策划,讲话人基本上可以直接进入发音计划。随随便便的会话,没有很强的结构性,所以需要在每一个平面上进行策划。仪式化了的事件,比如西方的结婚仪式,有严密的结构。谁说什么,什么时候说,都事先规定好了,参与者只需读出或背出自己的“名词”。所以在任何平面上都无策划可言,讲话人只要张口把规定好的话讲出来就是了。其他类型的语篇都处于这两个极端之间,都需要多多少少的语篇策划。

5.3.1 有关句子平面以上的语言结构的研究对语言本质的揭示

语言结构不仅仅存在于句子平面上。语篇的结构和组织的规则刚刚开始探讨,但到目前为止的研究表明,不论对话还是独白,都有组织规则。如果使用某种语言的讲话人严重偏离了其语篇规则,会引起听话人的注意。其结果可能使交际无法进行下去,或者对方开始怀疑讲话人的社会交际能力,即没有能力使自己的言谈举止被社会所接受。无论是哪种情况,如果讲话人(尤其是本族语者)一贯地不遵循语篇规范,他们很可能难以以任何身份与别人交往。

5.3.2 有关句子平面以上的语言结构的研究对语言教学的启示

应该让学习者认识到,在句子平面以上也有语言结构规则。显然这些规则还没有完全描写出来,学习者应该意识到它们是存在的,而且象其他语言运用一样,也受到语境的影响。准备讲话时,讲话人要首先识别他们将要参加的语言活动属于哪种语篇。此外,

还要考虑语境（如：与朋友交谈时，也有话轮替换规则，但互相打断是可以被接受的，而与上司谈话时打断对方就不那么容易被接受），然后决定在这种情况下应该如何运用语篇规则。

5.4 句子计划

现在，我们假设讲话人已经正确地识别自己面临的语篇类型，语言活动发生的场合，以及某一句话在语篇序列中**所处的位置**。在造出这个句子之前，讲话人先要计划一下如何表达这句话所要传达的意图。比如，他们必须判断需要提供多少细节情况，是否要强调意义的某个方面，是否要直接表示意义，还是需要拐弯抹角。

一般地讲，讲话人**遵循简洁标准**，除非有什么具体理由不能这样做。这一点与第二章讲的口头语言的理解是有逻辑关系的。听话人相信，讲话人在**遵循现象原则**和**合作原则**，而且想让听话人理解自己。所以讲话人用最简单的方式来表达自己的意义，以便让听者尽可能容易地了解自己的意图。

但是，什么是简单的方式呢？实验证明，在英语中表达某些意义领域时，大部分人使用相似的表达方式。如：

1. 尽量用肯定句而不用否定句：

说“那位大夫是女的”，而说不说“那位大夫不是男的”。

（柯拉克夫妇，1977）

2. 进行比较时先说大的再说小的：

说“吊车比卡车大”，而说不说“卡车比吊车小”。（福洛斯·地阿凯斯，1970）

3. 竖向排列时先说上后说下：

说“A在B之上”而说不说“B在A之下”。（奥斯古德，1971）

4. 有时间顺序的事件，先说早的再说晚的：

说“A发生在B之前”，而不说“B发生在A之后”。（柯拉克，1970a）

当然，如果讲话人希望表达特殊的意图，强调自己意义的某一个方面，他们也可以不遵守以上规则。但是，在大多数情况下，只要讲话人想直接了当表达意义，简洁标准似乎都是适用的。

5.4.1 以上研究对语言本质的揭示

总的说来，口头语言用尽可能简单的方式自然地讲出来，使讲话人能够清楚地表达自己的意图。这种观点的证据来自于对口头语言的理解。对口头语言的理解表明，说出的话很少有长句，也很少有结构复杂的句子，而且用文字语言的标准来衡量是“有缺陷”的。我们还讲过，讲话人设法让听话人听懂自己的话。他们的表达方式越简单，听话人加工处理听到的话语就越容易，结果他们理解话语意义的可能性就越大，这才能保证讲话人达到讲话的目的。

5.4.2 以上研究对语言教学的启示

1. 教师和学习者应该认识到，简单的口头语言是自然的口头语言。所以，能够讲出足以表达意图的简单、清楚、易被理解的话语，是语言学习者的正当的目标。

2. 学习者要想能够简单、清楚地表达自己、用不着懂得如何用许多方式去表达同一功能。任何语言中的任何功能（如：致谢，打招呼，主动帮助，请求等）都有许多可能的表达方式，用于不同的场合。打算成为正式翻译或外交官的学习者也许需要掌握同一功能的各种各样的表达方法，以适应各种各样的、正式程度不同的场合。但是，大部分学习者大概用不着如此微妙地表达自己。对于他们来说，按照简明标准，集中学会流利地使用三种中性的表达方法去完成每种功能，似乎是比较明智的。

3. 教师和学习者都应认识到，用外语讲出的（包括写出的）语

言，比学习者能够理解的语言，在结构上总是要简单一些。所以，不能期望结构上复杂的听力输入和阅读输入会使学习者产生出结构上同样复杂的口头（或文字）语言。

5.5 实施言语计划

人们讲话之前，尽管看来有必要策划一番，而且也的确进行策划，但是从前几章的讨论可以清楚地看到，真正说出的话语用文字语言的准确性标准来衡量，还是“有缺陷”的。下面一例很说明问题：

As far as I know, no one yet has done the/in a way obvious now and interesting problems of (PAUSE) doing a /in a sense a structural frequency study of the alternative (PAUSE) syntactical [UH]/ in a given language, say like English, the alternative [UH] possible structures and how/what their hierarchical (PAUSE) probability of occurrence-structure is. (见马克雷和奥斯古德, 1959: 25)

此段文字是非常真实的口头语言，事先策划没有能够保证说出的句子都是合乎语法的。全段充满了犹豫、停顿、错误的开头（标着斜线的地方）。这种现象与讲话人的受教育的程度毫无关系，因为本段摘自于心理语言学学术讨论会上的一个报告。所以，看来有些因素或者干扰策划过程本身，或者干扰言语计划的实施。

现在人们发现，有三个因素影响充分地策划或影响实施准备好的计划。第一，讲话人谈论的主题的难易会影响到迅速、流利的表达。泰勒（1969）做过实验，挑选四个词，按其出现频率高低和抽象程度分为四组。四个词译成汉语是：

	具体的	抽象的
高频的	小轿车 (2.27秒)	快乐 (2.71秒)
低频的	万花筒 (3.49秒)	富足 (3.76秒)

泰勒把这四个词一个一个地给实验对象，让他们用这些词造句。每个词后面括号里的数字是他们造句时所用的平均时间——从策划到讲出之前的时间。数字说明，低频词（即生疏的主题）和比较抽象的词，使用起来所需策划时间要长些。如果没有这点额外时间，就可能完不成策划，讲了的话语就会有缺陷。

第二个因素与此相关，即主题已定，所要讲的内容的难易也会影响讲话人的流利程度。利文（1967）曾做过实验。他的实验对象是两组儿童。他给儿童看两个不同大小、不同颜色的气球。大气球里面装的是煤气，小气球里面装的是空气。他放手之后，大气球升上空中，小气球慢慢地落到地上。然后，他问了儿童们两个问题，让他们口头回答。他先问道：“我的气球放开之后发生了什么事？”孩子们很流利地把自己看到的事描写出来，没有犹豫，没有停顿。之后他又问：“这是为什么？”孩子们发现解释起来困难多了，回答得也不那么流利的了。所以是让他们要讲的内容的复杂性影响到他们的语言质量。因此，看来情况是这样的：说话时，叙述一系列的事件或描写一个场景、地方或人物要容易些；解释因果关系或进行比较要困难一些。

最后，社会因素也可能影响一个人讲话的流利程度。社会因素会在不少方面使讲话人忧虑，担心。比如，讲话人知道自己对正在谈论的主题不太熟悉（如关于美国的太空计划）或者是自己不习惯公开谈论的事情（如对某人之死的感想）。听话人也能使讲话人感到忧虑。例如，讲话人不知道听话人对所谈论的主题持什么态度，

或不知道应该设想双方有多少共有知识。于是，讲话人感到讲话时要倍加小心，所以在策划上花的精力太多，而实际讲话时注意不够。讲话人也许着急参加到对话中去，恐怕失去讲话的机会，结果还没有充分策划之前就开始说话了。这时也可能导致“有缺陷”的话语出现。

5.5.1 讲母语不够流利的现象对语言本质的揭示

1. 尽管讲话前进行策划，实际讲出的话语还是有缺陷，达不到语法书上所要求的那样准确。

2. 有些主题不经常谈论或者比较抽象，很多人谈论起来就比较困难，讲话缺乏信心，不够流利。

3. 有些话语类型（如叙述）在结构上和概念上比其他类型（如说理性的）要容易些。所需策划越简单，讲起来可能就越流利。

4. 口头语言活动总是发生在某种社会场合。如果这种场合的某些方面引起讲话人的忧虑，就可能会影响他的言语策划和流利程度。

5.5.2 讲母语不够流利的现象对语言教学的启示

1. 教师不应该期望学习者用外语自由表达意义时必须讲出语法完全正确的语句。

2. 教师应该承认学习者自由交谈时是会犯错误的。如果教师要求学习者自愿地试着去讲外语，就不应该中途打断他们，纠正他们的错误。如果教师不断纠正他们的错误，可能会给他们造成忧虑。这种忧虑只会造成更多的错误，而不会减少错误。

3. 这并不是说教师应该完全不过问他们犯的错误。学习者使用外语时，教师注意听他们犯的错误，把好几个学习者犯的同样错误和确实影响交际的错误记下来，在下堂课中通过有指导的练习来处理这些错误。

4. 学习者在自由交谈的口语课上, 教师应该让他们讨论日常生活的主题, 以便每个人都有话可说, 而且有一定的词汇(如: 家庭, 家舍, 工作, 学校)。一旦学习者认识到自己能够用外语讨论这种简单题目时, 他们便会增加了信心准备试着谈论更复杂一些的主题。

5. 既然所有人都会多多少少地受到社会忧虑的影响, 那么课堂上的气氛应该尽可能的不让学生害怕, 尽量鼓励他们练习说话。这样会使他们相信即使犯几个错误也不致于遭到嘲笑或批评。

小结

本章讨论的主要问题:

1. 人们谈话总是有目的的。人们谈话很少交流参与者都知道的信息。谈话的目的可以非常直接了当(如“对不起, 我来晚了。”), 也可以模模糊糊, 拐弯抹角(如“你喜欢这件上衣吗?”)。有些目的是一本正经的(如: “我可以卖给你1000套, 每套350元。”), 有些目的是为了搞好社会关系(如“您好!”)。每一种目的都可以用许多不同方式表达出来。学习者不可能学会用外语表达一切目的的一切方式。教师应该判断, 哪些目的可能对学习者最为重要, 表达这些目的的哪些方式可能最适合学习者将来会遇到的场合。

2. 讲话前, 讲话人需要做不少的策划。要想很好地策划, 就需要语言信息和非语言性信息。实际上, 策划过程中的五个阶段可能是互相重叠的一组阶段。既然正常的流利话语中不是每两句之间有很长的停顿, 看来讲话人可能是一边策划一边讲话。

3. 一切语言在语篇平面上都有组织结构。任何语言的语篇结构都还没有充分描写清楚。但是, 在不遵循结构规则时, 语篇结构的存在显得特别清楚, 因为这时出现的语言总使人觉得有些奇怪。不

同语言的语篇结构规则或多或少有些不同。有必要教给学习者外语中已经有所描写的语篇规则，使他们产生出得体的口头（和文字）语言。

4. 如果用文字语言的语法准确性来衡量口头语言，后者似乎充满了“错误”。这些“错误”，诸如不完整的句子，重复句，犹豫句，都是口头语言的正常组成部分。教师应该认识到这一点，不应试图强迫学习者说出不自然的、“没有错误的”口头语言。至少应该有一定的时间鼓励学习者用外语去实现自己的交际目的，而不用担心自己的话语是否准确。这并不是说教师可以完全不顾一切“错误”。正如第七章将讨论的，有些“错误”比别的“错误”更影响理解。教师应该指出这种“错误”，并让学生更多地练习使用正确形式。

5. 所谈论的主题，所要说的内容和讲话人的忧虑程度都会影响话语的流利程度。教师应努力保证学习者（特别是初学者）对他们要讨论的主题是熟悉的。教师还应该知道有些语篇结构（如叙述和发布命令）比其他语篇结构（如解释目录关系）要简单一些，学习者用外语讨论起来也容易一些。不论让学习者谈论什么，如果课堂气氛不那么令人担心害怕，他们可能更愿意发言。因此，教师必须努力创造一种鼓励性的、合作的课堂气氛，以便使学习者都感到能够“冒险”试试自己的口语能力。

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第六章 心理语言学对语言和学习 的揭示

前面四章讲的是心理语言学家认为人们如何产生和理解口头语言和文字语言。本章首先探讨从口头语言和文字语言的特征中能得出什么结论，以及在语言运用中记忆所起的作用。然后讨论学习者需要了解语言系统本身的哪些事实才能产生和理解语言，以及心理语言学提供的证据对教授语言技能的启示。最后简单讨论一种语言教学法及其应该具有的特征。

6.1 文字语言和口头语言的特征及记忆的作用

6.1.1 口头语言

人们自己说话或听别人说话，总是有一定目的的。讲话人说话是为了对听众有某种影响。听话人则为了理解讲话人旨在施加的影响到底是什么。

口头语言一般不象文字语言那样严格遵守语法规则。虽然口语也是经过策划的，但其流利程度可能受到各种因素的影响：主题本身的难度，所要讲的内容，社会的或情景的特征使讲话人感到的忧虑，以及听话人对话语的反应。结果，正常讲话中，言语计划很少能够完美地实施。因此，听话人不得不处理这类口语：充满犹豫、重复，有些词发音模糊，发音不正确，重读和语调的模式不规则，还可能带有各种各样的口音或方言。

讲话人的“缺陷”实际上有利于听话人。由于正常口语中使用犹豫句和重复句，所以用的词多，表达的意义少，口语输出包含了大量的冗余信息。于是，听话人无需加工处理每一个听到的词才能理解讲话人的意义。听者只对对方的意义感兴趣，并不注意用以表达意义的那些词。

听话人的另一个有利条件是可以相信讲话人正在遵循**现实原则**和**合作原则**，而且口头语言一般也符合**简洁标准**。总地说来，听话人通常可以相信讲话人想要他们理解自己的话语，对方一般采用最直截了当的方式表达自己的意义。

讲话人要使自己的话语符合语篇类型和情景特征时，听话人在理解对方话语时，都要利用长期记忆中的语言信息和非语言性信息。

6.1.2 文字语言

正象口头语言一样，文字语言也总是用于达到一定的目的。人们要阅读某篇文章是因为他们认为可以从中发现如何回答自己感兴趣的问题。人们撰写篇章为的是表达某种意图或观点，或者为了给一位或几位读者提供某种信息。当然，阅读和写作的目的是多种多样的，目的不同阅读和写作的风格也有差异。

一般说来，文字语言的结构比口头语言的结构更加“正确”。词的界限和句子界限都很清楚，信息也更加密集。用词少，含义多。但是，文字语言也含有结构上和语境上的冗余信息，这些信息能帮助读者理解篇章。

文字信息的结构比口头语言的结构更为复杂。这是因为写作时人们有时间思考自己要写的东西，可以回过头来读一读已经写成的东西，可以尽情地修改。结构上的复杂性是使文章难以理解的因素之一。其他因素还有：读者对主题的熟悉程度，作者是直截了当还是拐弯抹角地表达意义。

阅读母语时，人们是为了回答明确的或不明确的问题而寻找答案。为了找到答案，一般不用阅读文章中每一个词。读者的眼睛上下左右移动，时而停止在一组词上（注视）来核查其意义。人们的阅读速度取决于阅读的目的和在每次注视中大脑必须做出选择的意义范围。高效率的读者利用语言在结构和语境上的冗余信息，利用对前文的理解和普通常识，来预示下文的内容，从而缩小在每次注视中大脑必须考虑的选择范围。

无论是作者向想像中的读者表达自己的意图时，还是读者理解作者的意图时，都不仅依靠其语言知识，还要依靠有关所处情景的普通常识。不论是语言知识还是情景知识，都储存于长期记忆。

6.1.3 记忆

据信，记忆可分为两大部分：短期记忆和长期记忆。

短期记忆的能力是有限的：它所能处理的信息量较小，所存的信息停留的时期较短。由于这种有限的的能力，它只能在语言产生和理解过程中的某一阶段起一定的作用。

在言语策划中，只有到最后阶段才涉及到短期记忆。反过来，在理解过程中，似乎是短期记忆首先处理文字或口语输入，以便识别其表层的命题意义。长期记忆则是人们一生经历中所获得的全部语言和非语言性信息的永久性仓库。

人们的记忆中包括所掌握的一切语言的语言信息。视其对语言的熟悉程度，这种信息可能包括语篇、句子、组成成分各层次上的结构信息，以及词汇、语音、韵律方面的信息。

要想启用这种语言信息，就必须利用非语言性信息。这种知识可以是具体的母语（或第二、第三语言）的文化知识，有关在特定场合中如何使用特定的语言的知识。例如，关于如何使用母语的文化知识，可以使母语讲话人（或作者）准确判断听众（或读者）应该已经知道什么，以及语言情景所要求的礼貌程度。如果不具备这

种知识（比如使用第二语言时），语言使用者可借助于长期记忆中的信息，看人们在类似场合中如何行事。在此基础上，再加上自己的经验，他们便能够判断在特定场合下一般表达什么样的意义是得体的，或者如何理解别人的话语才是得体的。

只有通过长期记忆中的语言知识和非语言性知识的积极配合，人们才能有效地、得体地使用语言。

6.2 学习另一种语言时需要掌握语言系统的哪些知识？

为了能够产生和理解语言，学习者需要对语言系统有清楚的理解，还要掌握足够的词汇。有些学习者对外语的需要有明确的界限，也许只须掌握一些结构知识就可以了。例如，有人学习英语只是为了阅读船舶工程杂志，所掌握的语言系统知识和词汇能使他们读懂这种杂志就可以了。中国的学习者大多数没有这么明确的学习目的。以下各节的讨论是针对这些学习者的。

6.2.1 语音层次

学习要能够产生和理解第二语言的语音和韵律特征。从产生语言讲，说话的时候必须能让听众听得懂。这并不是说要达到本族人的发音和语调的水平。前面讲过，本族人在遵循“规则”的程度方面也有很大的不同。象英语这种使用如此广泛的语言，本来就有几套不同的规则（如，有美国英语和英国英语发音上的差别）。学习者的目标应该是使自己的发音相当正确，保证听话人很容易地听懂讲话的内容。从理解语言讲，学习者要能对付用各种普通口音和正常速度讲出的自然语言的发音。

6.2.2 词汇层次

每种语言都有为数众多的词汇。学习者必须决定学习哪些词。这种抉择要注意到积极词汇和消极词汇的区别。

所谓积极词汇就是能识别又能使用的词，应该包括外语的结构词。结构词数量有限，出现频率高，对产生和理解口头语言和文字语言都是至关重要的。在为数众多的内容词中，学习者应把哪些做为自己的积极词汇呢？考虑这个问题时，教师应该记住，一个词的频率和近期的使用似乎影响到从大脑词库中提取该词的难易程度。抉择时应该考虑学习者可能需要哪些词，同时考虑到这些词汇在这种语言中出现频率如何。对学习者的语言输入，期望他们给予的语言输出，都应遵循一条原则：即词汇应该反复、频繁地出现。人们认为积极词汇需要这种练习。

在可能的情况下，所有积极词汇的词类和普通词缀第一次出现时就应该加以识别。这种知识，在听或读外语材料中，能够使学习者利用结构冗余线索。

6.2.3 句法层次

前面讲过，口头语言和文字语言在结构复杂程度上和所载信息密度上有所不同。一般说来，学习语法时以文字语言形式为根据。语法书似乎认为，一种语言中的结构模型出现频率是相同的，而且同等重要，所以对一切句法结构都一视同仁。事实上，任何语言的不同句型都有不同的出现频率。构成这些句子的不同组成成分（如名词短语和动词短语）也有不同的出现频率。特定的词类必须出现在句中的特定位置。

往往有这种情况，经过多年的学习之后，学习者仍然不能在各种情况下始终如一地写出符合语法规范的简单句子，说出能被理解的简单话语。使学习者能够表达和理解简单意义的办法之一，就是从一开始就讲清语言的句法规律。例如，一开始教师就介绍表达普

通意义的普通句型，并且给学生做示范，说明这些句型是如何由基本上可以预示的组成成分和短语构成的。研究句中表达意义的不同词类和变换词序对意义的影响，也可以帮助学生语言的自然的冗余现象有更深入的认识，这对他们的听力和阅读技巧也有积极作用。

在高年级教授语法应在已有语法知识的基础上进行。通过教授更复杂的句子组成成分的构成，自然也就会涉及到更复杂的句型及其表达的意义。

6.2.4 语篇层次

语言的意义很少用孤立的句子表达。正如句中一个项目的意义在很大程度上取决于前后项目的意义一样，语篇中的某句话的意义取决于所在语境。句子层次以上的语篇也是有组织结构的。

还没有任何一种的语篇结构已经被充分地描写出来，但有一点是很明显的：不同类型的语篇有不同的功能，具有不同的组织结构特征。不论是口头语言还是文字语言，不遵循其语篇结构规则，就会引起听者或读者的注意，可能会严重影响他们的理解。

必须训练学习者能够识别自己要理解或产生的语篇的主要功能。还要训练他们能够预示阅读或听力中可能遇到的组织结构特征，或者在写作和讲话时应该遵循的组织结构特征。他们还应该知道语篇标记如何使句子联系起来，懂得如何运用粘着手段和指示词项。

6.3 语言运用：技能教学

6.3.1 全部技能

在不同环境下的学习者使用语言要达到的目的会多少有些不同。所以，在决定培训学习者哪些技能之前，应该首先搞清他们学

习语言的目的是什么。

一切语言运用都涉及到语言信息和非语言性信息的结合。使用母语时，这种结合是自然而然的。应让学习者清楚地知道，他们已经具备的非语言性信息，在使用第二语言时同样能够使用。

下面我们将分别讨论各种技能的训练。不过应该看到，使用语言时很难说只用到一种技能；通常人们是又说又听，或又听又写，或又读又写。所以，训练学生使用第二语言时，教师应该记住这一点，保证至少在某些教学活动中，学生要用到一种以上的技能。

6.3.2 说

口语活动可以有很大差别，从使用的语言受到严格控制到毫无控制。诸如操练、替换练习、句型转换、背诵对话等受到严格控制的口语活动，可能对在长期记忆中牢牢记住某些句型很有帮助，但这种活动与正常使用口头语言没有什么关系，所以不应该过多采用。即使要用，教师也应尽量将其置于可能出现的情景（参见Littlewood书中的建议）。

不受什么限制的口语活动应该有个目标，而且学习者应该知道这个目标是否达到了。例如，只让学习者“讨论”一个题目，就没有什么目标。而让他们“讨论并决定三种可能性中你同意哪一种，并说明为什么”，就有一定的目标。

学习者用外语说出的语言一般都不如他们能够读懂的语言那样复杂。所以，教师教给学生用外语做事情（完成功能）时，应该认真考虑学生是否真的需要熟练地知道好几种说法，比如提出建议的许多说法。学会一两种在很多情况都适用的说法可能使学生记得更清楚，也能使他们足以应付可能会遇到的大多数场合。

学习者讲出的语言（在自由口语活动中）必然会有错误的。出现错误的多少与他们进行的活动有关系。如果所谈论的话题是他们所熟悉的，所处的场合不使他们紧张，那么出现的错误就会少些。

大部分的错误并不影响交际，所以不应该当场给予纠正。如果教师认为有些错误是主要的，可以在口语活动结束后有控制地加以处理。

语言运用中的“得体性”这些年已有广泛的讨论。能够恰如其分地使用语言就要懂得“语言运用规则”。迄今为止，还没有一种语言的运用规则得到充分的描写，而且“规则”一词常常给人一种错误的印象。诚然，有些社会交往，如打招呼 and 告别，已经礼仪化了，可以说已经有规可循。但是，还不能说语言运用规则象语法规则那样严格。在大多数情况下，每个人使用语言时都有自己的特点。因此，对某几种十分具体的交往场景来说，已经有普遍接受的惯用套语，可以让学习者去练习使用或背诵，但是得体性中的大部分知识目前还不可能系统地教授。如果教师知道第一语言文化与第二语言文化在语言运用中的某些具体差异，自然应该告诉学生。但是还应指出，这些差异不一定适用于第二语言国家的每一个成员。例如，对许多西方人来说，谈论有多少钱或挣多少工资属于禁忌。一般说来这是对的，但**并不总是**对的。对不同社会进行的有关语言运用规则的跨文化研究表明，一般可以认为，在第一语言社会中比较正式、客客气气、彬彬有礼的场合，在第二语言社会也属于正式场合。反之亦然，第一语言文化中的非正式场合在第二语言文化中也属于轻松的、非正式的场合。

6.3.3 听

听是一种积极的过程。听话者总是有一定目的的，而且开始听之前就知道为什么要听。学习者在听什么材料之前也应该知道为什么要听。听的时候，人们一般用身体动作或声音（如点头和“嗯”，“对”，“啊”）来“支持”讲话人，以表示听者正在注意听。

要理解讲话人的意义就会用到情景线索（如所谈的主题，讲话

人是谁,谈话的地点)。进行听力活动之前,教师应提供有关情景信息,以帮助学习者调动自己的非语言性知识,这样他们能够预示可能会听到的内容。

应该提醒学习者,正常的口头语言中有许多冗余现象,而且可以相信讲话人想让他们听懂自己的话。通常学习者不必这样担心:漏掉一个词或一个短语,就会听不懂整个意思。

听口头语言会遇到许多口音和方言,而且语速和语调也不尽相同,其中许多话不符合“理想的”规则。要想能够应付各种变体,学习者需要尽可能地接触各种不同的语言输入,各种不同的讲话人。口头语言与文字语言不尽相同。读出来的文字语言材料不适合作听力理解材料。如果用这种材料练习听力,教师必须从文字材料中摘出要点,然后以要点为基础制作成口头语言材料。

6.3.4 读

人们阅读总是有目的的,所以让学习者阅读之前也应该告诉他们阅读是为了什么(如要回答几个问题或完成几项任务)。不同的目的要求不同的阅读方式;不同的阅读方式又适用于不同的语篇风格。在母语中,人们自然而然根据语篇文体和阅读目的来调整自己的阅读方式。学习者要练习在外语阅读中适应这种技能。他们需要尽量接触要求不同阅读方式的各种文体的语篇。中国的英语学习者可以利用《中国日报》做下列活动:

1. 练习预示内容:读有关国内和国际形势的大标题。
2. 练习查阅:有关饭店、求职、买汽车的广告;电视和文娱节目。
3. 练习略读或较仔细的阅读:书评、影评,给编辑的信,旅游信息。

学习者应该知道,从生理角度讲阅读速度限制在每秒钟四至五次注视之内。所谓更快速的阅读,就是要充分利用一切句法和语义

上下文，尽可能地使两次注视之间相隔甚远，而仍然达到阅读的目的。学习者应该练习在阅读之前和阅读之中利用语言和非语言性知识预示下文的内容。

选择阅读材料时，要考虑到学习者可能的阅读需要和兴趣。让他们做的阅读活动应该能使他们练习到各种不同阅读方法，从快速略读到查阅，直到详细的文体分析等，而且使他们养成一种习惯——在某些阅读中即使忽略了文章中的某些细节也不必担心。强调哪种阅读方式应该参考学习者将来需要进行哪种阅读。

选择阅读材料时，还需要记住：文章的难易不仅取决于语言的复杂性，而且取决于文章的主题和表达方式的直接和间接程度。所以，除了使材料的语言适合学生的语言水平之外，还要考虑到学习者是否具备理解文章所需要的非语言知识。

6.4 以上内容对教学法的启示

就教学“看法”而言，以心理语言学研究的启示为基础的任何教学法都会承认，人类语言是一套组音成词、遣词造句、组句成章的系统规则；学习这些规则的目的是使人们能够互相交际。这样一种方法还会强调，懂得一种语言要求使用者能够把语言系统知识同有关语言使用的具体情景的非语言性知识结合起来。这种方法还会承认，学习一种语言涉及到学习语言系统的规则 and 如何使用这些规则。这种方法强调，学习和记忆规则系统和词汇的最有效的办法，是在有意义的、自然的语境中教授语言，而且所学的项目在不同的语境中重复出现。所选择的语境应该是学习者感到与其学习外语的目的密切相关的语境。总之，这种方法认为，学习另一种语言要练习运用该语言在相关语境中**做事情**。

就“设计”而言，以这种教学方法为指导的教学大纲会首先考虑学习的目的是什么。大纲会强调，既进行外语的结构训练，又进

行学习者将来所需要的技能训练。按大纲而编写的教材将把语言结构和词汇按照不同主题放到情景中去教授，而且这些情景必须是学习者感兴趣的，与之相关的情景。教材还要提供各种各样的练习活动，有的控制严格些，有的控制不那么严格，有的则类似实际生活中的交际活动。

就课堂“程序”而言，这将比现在的许多做法灵活一些，包括更多的课堂活动种类。正式教授语言结构和词汇仍然是必要的。但是，如果想让学习者有机会运用所学的知识，控制不太严格的活动是十分重要的。要把这种活动搞好，教师就需要掌握有关的课堂技术和组织技巧。教师还应该保证课堂气氛较好，即使是最腼腆的学生也敢试着用学到的语言知识表达自己或理解别人。

在这种课堂上，学习者不再只当被动的听众去学习更多的语言系统的细节。有些时候他们要积极地练习使用自己的外语知识和有关语言通常如何使用的常识，来帮助他们在阅读和听力活动中预示和识别意义，在口语和写作活动中表达自己的意义。

第七章 第一和第二语言习得： 相同还是不同

阅读本章之前，请先考虑如何回答以下问题：

1. 据说，儿童习得第一语言时就是把听到的语言“搬来”就用。这种说法对吗？如果不对，那么第一语言是如何学到的呢？
 2. 任何第二语言都或多或少与学习者的母语有所不同。是不是二者区别越大，学习第二语言就越困难呢？
 3. 使用第二语言时犯的一切错误都是同等严重的吗？教师如何决定哪一个错误严重或不严重呢？
 4. 把一个外语学习班的目标定为要达到本族语者的流利程度是否合理？
 5. 年龄大致相同，母语一样，学时一样，上的课程也相同的学习者，最后达到的水平却不相同，这是为什么？
 6. 母亲对孩子使用语言的方式与教师对语言学习者使用语言的方式有什么区别？
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7.1 引言

在本章之前，我们讨论了人们在理解和产生语言时要经过的心理过程，无论他们讲的是什么语言。在本章中，我们要讨论人们探讨学习第二语言时的过程。为了理解学习第二语言的过程，我们还

要研究儿童如何习得第一语言。

目前，人们认为学会一种外语主要通过两种渠道。一种叫**学习**，即通过课堂教学或自学，有意识地去学习语言的语法形式及其通常表达的意义。一种是**习得**，即通过在外语语言环境中使用和理解语言的形式来学习语言。

越来越多的人用**第二语言习得**（SLA）泛指学会第二语言的结构和使用的过程，不论是有意识地学习，还是无意识地学习。在以下几章中，我们也用**第二语言习得**来泛指第二语言能力的整体发展。如果只是指有意识地学习语言形式，就用**学习**一词的黑体。如果是指由于接收和使用第二语言而自然而然地掌握了它的结构，就用**习得**这个词，也用黑体。

如果有机会的话，大部分学习者都可以通过**学习**和**习得**发展自己的第二语言能力。哪一种途径更为重要，要视其学习的环境。例如，中国的大部分英语学习者，很少接触第二语言环境，所以可能主要依靠有意识的课堂**学习**来提高英语水平，至少初级阶段是这样。在中国的外国人学习汉语时，由于周围都是讲汉语的环境，则有很多机会**习得**汉语口语形式及其使用。

过去的20~30年中，对第二语言习得已有大量的研究。研究者们要回答的问题包括：

学习或习得第二语言时的心理过程如何？

教师如何才能最有效地帮学生**学习或习得**第二语言？

为什么人们学习第二语言时的方式和速度如此不同？

为什么学习者课时相同、课程相同而达到的语言水平如此不同？

是强调**学习**学得快？还是强调**习得**学得更快？还是最好二者都强调？了解人们如何习得第一语言对我们回答以上问题有多大帮助？

7.2 第一语言习得

人们刚刚出生时的语言能力是极为有限的，起初只会哭、笑或者保持沉默。四、五年之后，只要大脑是正常的，人们就学会了母语的全部基本语法和音位结构，并能在许多语境中用它来进行交际。尽管家庭环境十分不同，尽管母语输入的质量和数量不同，来自于同一语言社团的儿童到上学时，他们掌握的母语结构仍相同，接近于成人的母语水平。而且他们学会这些结构的顺序似乎也是相同的。

既然儿童成长的环境不同，语言输入的种类和数量不同，而学到的语言结构相同，顺序也一样，那么很显然，单单靠语言输入不能习得第一语言。他们一定有办法利用这种输入，以便识别母语的结构。

据说，婴儿一出生就开始“研究”语言；因为他们具有天生的、遗传的习得语言的能力。这种能力常被称为语言习得机制（LAD）。近来，关于语言习得机制到底包含哪些有用信息的各种看法，受到“普遍语法”（UG）理论的影响。

据认为，儿童的语言习得机制从一出生就含有普遍语法的原则，而且一切语言都要遵守这些原则。随着儿童的成长，他们越来越能加工处理周围环境提供的语言信息，普遍语法的原则也就开始被“揭示”出来。因此，由于普遍语法原则的存在，儿童在出生后几年中的某个时间，在某智力发展能力允许的范围内，已经建立起语言形式的最完整的系统。

据信，普遍语法包含“语言普遍现象”中的核心成分：即一切语言所共有的结构和音位特征。例如，一切语言都有元音，都有影响意义的语序，都具有标记时间关系的手段。不过，虽然这些普遍现象确实存在，但是它们在不同语言中得以表达的方式是不同的。一切语言确实都有元音，但是不同语言使用的元音是不一样的；一

切语言确实都有标记时间的手段，但是不同语言标记时间的手段不同，区分时间的精细程度也不同。

据信，关于语言普遍现象的信息，儿童一出生就已经编制于其大脑。随着其认知能力的成熟，这种信息能够帮助他们理解周围越来越多的语言。最后他们无意识地识别结构规律，从而弄清语言普遍现象在自己的母语中是如何实现的。

各种语言中有些项目符合语言的普遍现象，同样也有些项目不符合普遍语法。这些项目的出现可能是语言的历史演变而成的，也许是政治或经济因素造成的，也许是通过借代其他语言而造成的。因此一切语言都有两组项目：一个核心组，是语言普遍现象在具体语言中的体现；一个外围组，是只用于语言的项目。此外，这些项目的“有标记”性也不相同。语言中的有标记的项目是不规则的，出现频率不高，也不易理解。它们更趋向语言的边缘，习得母语时这些项目也学到的更迟一些。

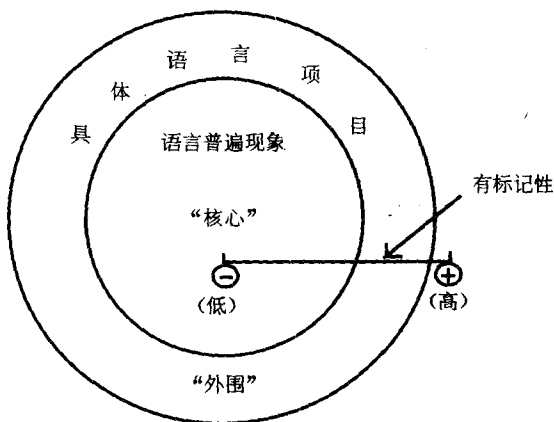


图7 语言普遍现象和有标记性

儿童把编制于大脑的普遍语法原则，用于别人对自己说的话和自己随便听到的语言，便开始不自觉地辨认母语中的规则。这是一

个逐渐辨认的过程。并不是说，今天还不会提问题，明天就完全掌握了疑问句的形式。对正在习得母语的儿童的语言研究表明，儿童一开始要编造自己的语法。开始使用语言时，他们并不照抄自己听到的成人的语言。他们先讲单词句，再逐渐加长句子，组词成句的办法也是从来没有听到过的。看上去他们是在通过检验自己对该语言规则的假设，“创造性地构建”这种语言。尽管一开始他们的语言输入很有限，语言输出也极少，他们还是能够这样做，这是因为语言习得机制中的有关普遍语法的知识是与生俱来的，能够帮助他们找到可能的语言假设。

看来，习得母语的儿童是要检验语言的。他们要试一试自己的话哪一句能够比较合适地办到想让它办的事，对他人的语言的反应哪一句被认为是正确的。随着他们越来越多地识别正确的表达方式，越来越认识到语法标记对确定他人话语意义的作用，他们逐渐构建的语法规则系统越来越接近成人的系统，直到最后与成人语法系统很相象。

这不是正式学习的结果。成年人不给他们的孩子教授系统的语法课程。母语的语法系统是从儿童所处语言环境中自然习得的，也是必然要习得的。

7.2.1 母语习得对语言本质的揭示

1. 关于普遍语法的理论表明，某些音位和语法项目是基本的，是一切语言都用到的。母语中的这些项目一般习得较早。边缘性的、个别语言所具有的项目一般是有标记的，习得较晚。

2. 母语不必正式学习，儿童通过积极地与母语环境接触即可习得。

7.2.2 母语习得对语言教学的启示

1. 如果语言普遍现象确实存在，而且可以识别，那么第二语言中的这种普遍成分似乎应该首先教给学习者，并让他们操练。

2. 既然习得母语的儿童是通过积极参与交往而习得语言的, 那么我们应该考虑, 是否从一开始就让第二语言学习者时常有机会练习使用已学会的语言项目。

7.3 第二语言学习/习得

一切正常的儿童不用正式教授就能成功地习得母语的形式, 但是学习/习得第二语言时, 人们的学习速度和最后达到的水平就大不相同了。为什么会有这种情况? 学习第二语言的过程与习得母语的过程有什么区别? 这些问题已探讨多年, 但仍未彻底解决。

7.3.1 对比分析

50年代和60年代初是行为主义心理学的鼎盛时期。当时人们认为, 儿童学会正确的母语习惯靠的是越来越准确地照抄从成人那里听来的句子。关于习得和天生语言能力的概念还没有出现。但是学习第二语言时, 每个人能学到什么程度却大不相同, 这一点已经十分明显。

起初, 人们试图用母语与第二语言区别的大小来解释不同第二语言学习者能达到的不同水平。当时认为, 第二语言与母语差别越大, 讲这种母语的人学习这种第二语言就越困难, 母语对学习第二语言的“干扰”也就越大。如果能够识别母语与第二语言结构系统上的差异, 并加以描写, 那么外语教师就可以清楚地知道, 这种语言的哪些方面可能对讲某种母语的人造成特殊困难。有了这种知识, 教师在提供语言输入时, 便能集中教授对学生最有益的语言结构。

“如果教师已经把外语与学生的母语进行了比较, 就能更清楚地知道真正的问题所在, 也能为教授这些难点作好准备。”

(Lado, 1957)

结果出现了对世界主要语言结构进行**对比分析**的热潮。不过**对比分析**背后的设想很快就引起人们的怀疑。

如果第二语言学习者遇到的大部分困难果然来自于母语同第二语言的差异，必然会出现下列现象：

1. 学习者所犯的大部分错误应是母语与第二语言的差异所引起的。下面会讲到，有关研究证明，情况并非如此。

2. 如果大部分困难是母语与第二语言的差异所引起的，人们自然会认为，母语与第二语言语法规则十分相似时，学习者会发现这种外语规则容易学会。但实际情况并不总是这样。

3. 学习者能否轻而易举地判断一个句子是否合乎语法，应该取决于句中显示出的语法规则是否与母语中的对等规则十分相似。因此，母语相同的学习者在判断外语句子是否合乎语法时，应该有相同的能力。而实际上并非如此。

对以上问题的研究结果表明，单靠**对比分析**显然不能解释不同的人为什么学习第二语言时表现出如此大的差异。

7.3.2 语误分析

之后，研究者的兴趣转向学习者所犯语言错误的类型上。当时认为，通过研究这些语言错误，也许能够识别学习者正在经历的学习过程，从而发现学习者的第二语言水平是如何逐步提高的。语误分析材料的主要来源，就是对比分析法无法解释或预示的大量语言错误。

语误分析中的主要问题是如何对话误进行归类。尽管已有很多尝试，但到目前为止还没有建立起一种得到普遍承认的分类方法。

只有一种区分得到普遍承认，那就是把错误分成**整体错误**和**局部错误**。柏特和吉帕斯基（1972）从全世界成人英语学习者那里收集了几千句不正确的英语句子。然后选出有两个以上错误的句子，让本族语者判断句子的可理解程度，一边判断一边把错误一个一个

地改过来。例如：

原句：English Language use much people.

1. 加冠词：The English language use much people.
2. 改为many：The English language use many people.
3. 主宾调换：Much people use English language.

英语本族人发现上面的第三句最容易理解。再如：

原句：Not take this bus we late for school.

1. 加代词：We not take this bus we late for school.
2. 加do：Do not take this bus we late for school.
3. 加will：Not take this bus we will late for school.
4. 加if：If not take this bus we late for school.
5. 加be：Not take this bus we be late for school.

英语本族人发现上面的第四句最容易理解。

根据本族人对类似以上句子的反应，伯特和吉帕斯基区分出两类错误：第一类是整体错误，如上面提到的主语和宾语的调换。这类错误影响到全句的意义或句子之间的意义关系，因此会严重干扰交际。第二类是局部错误，如漏掉冠词。这类错误只影响句中某个组成部分的意义，不象整体错误那样会阻碍交际。

这种区分有一定的益处。它再次证明第二语言学习者需要掌握句子层次上的语法系统和句法以上的系统，才能用语言顺利地进行交流。不过，这种区分并不能把错误分成界限清楚，分类更细的几组，以便对学习者的心理过程有所揭示。

现在，第二语言习得研究开始把第二语言错误同儿童习得母语时的错误进行对比。人们研究了儿童外语学习者（Dulay and Burt, 1974），成人外语学习者（White, 1977），探讨了在何种程度上外语错误是母语“干扰”的结果。他们证明，至多有30%的外语错误可以追溯到母语根源；其他大部分错误，即70%，属于发展性错误，与儿童习得母语时的错误十分相似。

最常见的错误种类有:

1. 省略语法词素。如, He hit car.
2. 两次标记语义特征, 如时间。例如, She didn't went back.
3. 在错误语境中过多使用正确形式。如, I see her yesterday.

Her dance with my friend.

4. 不能应付词序的复杂性, 尤其是有些结构要求把所学的正确规则反转过来。如, You are reading. →What you are reading?

以上事实说明, 母语和第二语言的发展过程, 至少在早期, 有许多相同之处。

7.3.3 对比分析和语误分析对语言本质的揭示

涉及到句中或句子之间语义关系的错误, 比涉及句子构成成分的错误更加影响语言的清晰度。理解了构成成分表达的次要命题, 不能保证就能理解整个句子所表达的主要命题。同样, 只产生构成成分层次上的正确短语, 并不能保证可以直接、顺利地进行交际。

7.3.4 对比分析和语误分析对语言教学的启示

1. 如果普遍语法的设想是正确的, 某些对比分析(如着重分析母语和外语在表达普遍意义时的不同方式), 可能对学习者和教师都有帮助。

2. 不是一切语误对交际的影响都是一样的。如果一堂课的重点是训练流利程度, 那么教师应该集中精力识别整体错误, 而不是局部错误, 事后针对整体错误做有控制的练习。

3. 如果我们相信科研的证据, 即母语和第二语言学习者在学习或习得语言系统时经历着大致相同的发展过程, 那么设计第二语言大纲中的结构部分时, 就应该考虑到母语习得者所经历的几个阶段。

7.4 第二语言习得时的假设检验和过渡语

前面讲过，人们现在普遍认为儿童是**习得**母语，而不是有意识地**学习**母语。由于人们发现第二语言学习者的语误大部分与习得母语的儿童的错误相似，所以本学科研究者正在探讨，发展第二语言的过程与习得母语的过程到底有什么相似关系。应该指出，第二语言习得的大部分研究工作是在美国进行的，应试者是在第二语言环境中学习第二语言（英语）的。有时，研究者似乎忘记，即使是这种学习者，他们除了在语言环境中**习得**语言之外，也要花一定的时间在课堂上**学习**这种语言。在课堂上的正式学习到底有什么益处，将在第八章进行讨论。

在这种情况下进行工作的研究者提出，外语学习者发展自己对外语结构规则的理解时，与母语学习者的方法相同也是通过检验自己对这种语言所做的假设。其假设所用的数据是周围的人所用的这种语言，以及在日常外语交往中自己能够做的事情。比如，在特定情况下某句特定话语能否起到想象中的作用？这句话能否**完成**想让它**完成**的功能？

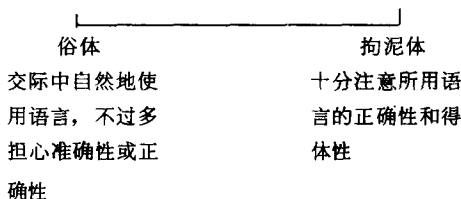
母语儿童通过做出的正确假设，能够从无到有构建起自己的语言结构知识，最终达到本族语者的水平。据说，第二语言学习者同样也可以这样做。学习第二语言过程中的任何时刻，学习者头脑中都有关于语言结构的一幅不完全正确的图画。这幅图画是正确程度不尽相同的、对语法系统的多种假设。被瑟令克（1972）称之为“过渡语”。

每人都有自己的“过渡语”，这种认识使我们开始解释为什么学习时间和学习内容相同的学习者之间会出现差异。学习外语过程中的每一时刻，每人都有自己的“过渡语”，也就是对外语结构的一组假设，其正确程度不尽相同。比如，通过接触英语，每个人在长期记忆中记住的正确的语法规则，在范围和数量上是各不相同

的。

不过，学习者之间的差异不仅表现在识别正确语法形式方面，而且表现在实际生活中产生和理解外语时的准确性和流利程度上，在使用语言的得体性上。所以，“过渡语”概念应该扩大，把这些方面也包括进去。塔伦（1983）提出**语言能力连续体**的说法。这是指每一条关于外语语法系统的正确假设，在什么时候才会出现，在什么时候才能正确用于语言的产生，又在什么时候才正确用于理解别人的语言。塔伦给这个连续体的两端起了名字：**拘泥体**和**俗体**：

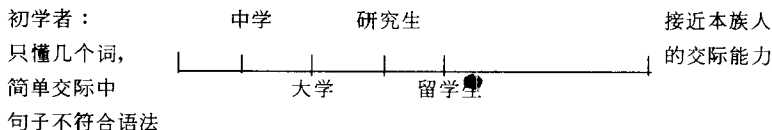
图8 语言能力连续体（塔伦，1983）



过渡语中的任何语法形式都可能用于连续体上的任何一点。大部分学习者能够在连续体的不同点上使用所学的规则，但其准确程度有所不同。这可以解释为什么学习者在使用某种语法结构时并不能够始终如一地避免错误。在某种场合下能够讲得正确或写得正确，说明他们正确识别了某种语法规则。在其他场合下他们也许不能正确使用这一规则。塔伦说，对于任何学习者来说，在连续体的**拘泥体**一端比较容易始终正确地运用某条所学规则，比如在正式写作中。反过来，在俗语一端，同一位学习者可能会错误地运用同一条规则。这并不是因为学习者不懂得这条规则，而是因为该规则还没有在长期记忆中记得很牢，还不能在正常口语交往的紧急情况下，仍然始终正确地使用这条规则。一个很好的例证就是，英语水平相当高的中国学生使用代词“他”和“她”时仍然有时混淆。由

于有语言运用这一变量，所以第二语言学习者不同于儿童习得母语，他们很难达到本族人的水平。大部分学习者始终处于过渡语连续体的某一位置：

图9 过渡语连续体



不论学习多长时间，几乎大多数学习者仍然有几条语法或音位规则不能在任何情况下都正确运用。这并不是说学习者不能继续完善自己的过渡语。要想继续完善，就得积极不断地扩大语言结构知识范围，继续提高运用规则的准确性，扩大规则运用的语境范围。在达到某个阶段之后，大多数学习者认为自己的语言已经够用或者再没有足够的学习时间，于是第二语言习得过程大大减慢。这时，过渡语的发展也就微乎其微了。

7.4.1 过渡语的概念对语言本质的揭示

1. 第二语言学习者在产生外语形式方面很难达到本族人的准确程度和得体程度。看来，不论在第二语言上花多少时间和精力，大部分人都达不到自己的母语那种水平。

2. 即使学习者接触的语言材料的数量和种类相似，在任何特定时刻，他们各自的过渡语，即在大脑中形成的第二语言语法结构图象，也是独一无二的。过渡语之间的区别不仅在于识别语法形式的正确程度，而且在于是否能够始终如一地运用这些形式。

3. 不同的学习者（本族语者也是如此）使用一种语法形式时，其正确程度有所不同；这是因为在具体运用语言时，对正确性和准确性的注意力有大有小。所以，较随便的语言（俗体），虽然可以被理解，但结构上往往“有缺欠”，特别是口头语言更是如此。

7.4.2 过渡语现象对语言教学的启示

1. 把任何第二语言培训目标定为达到本族人水平都是不现实的。尤其是教青年人、成人或作为外国语教, 就更不现实(这一点下面将进一步讨论。)。这部分人占世界上语言学习者的绝大多数。

2. 能够正确回答笔试语法测试题的学习者, 或者能够用正确的语法和发音做好有控制的口语练习的学习者, 未必能够在自然的实际交往中运用自己的知识。要想使学习者能够运用所学知识, 教师必须给他们提供机会, 在比较随便的和比较正式的场合使用语言。

3. 既然在比较随便的场合所产生的语言往往语法不尽善尽美, 教师对局部语误应采取容忍的态度。在语言能力连续体的更正式的一端则应该强调准确性。

7.5 对母语和第二语言学习者的输入

在利用接收的第二语言素材来建立和检验正确假设上, 第二语言学习者有快慢之分, 这与儿童习得母语形成对比。第二语言学习者以不同的速度在过渡语连续体上逐步前进, 最后达到不同的水平。解释这种差异时, 需要考虑学习者实际接收的语言素材, 因为这是检验假设的基础。要想初步形成假设, 学习者需要有语言输入和在实际生活中运用第二语言的机会。那么绝大多数的第二语言课堂提供了何种语言环境呢? 这种语言环境与儿童轻而易举地习得母语的言环境有什么区别呢?

7.5.1 母语输入——保姆式语言

年幼儿童接触的母语输入开始来自于父母, 特别是母亲。母亲与幼儿接触时所用的语言叫**保姆式语言**。研究表明, 保姆式语言主要有以下特征:

——母亲与儿童讲话时有一定目的。也许是要传达一个信息，也许是让孩子懂得某方面的社会得体性。这种输入要求对方做出回答。回答可以是语言的，也可以是非语言的。儿童做出语言回答时，人们更注意其得体性，而不太注意其形式的正确性。

——保姆式语言涉及的总是“当时、当地”的情况。母亲与儿童的早期接触总是关于儿童的直接环境：他们可以看到的，感觉到的，听到的，摸到的；他们当时的需要和兴趣。

——母亲与儿童的接触内容开始是可以预示的，所涉及的是范围很窄的重要内容，如食物，睡觉，玩。但是，随着儿童的成长，内容范围不断扩大，所需要的各种语言功能也不断增加。母亲鼓励孩子用所学语言去做尽可能多的事情。

——母亲讲话时使用短的、简单的、语法正确的句子。这些语句与同成人讲话时使用的语句相比，冗余和重复信息更多些。母亲根据孩子的反应调整自己的话语。如果孩子不作回答，或回答的不得体，母亲则重复一遍，或换个表达方式，或用动作示范自己话语的意思。

7.5.2 第二语言输入——教师式语言

大部分第二语言学习者只在课堂上才接触到第二语言。课堂上使用的语言叫**教师式语言**。这种语言也已有人研究，其主要特征是：

——与母亲一样，教师也使用短的、简单的、语法正确的句子和普通的、使用频率高的词汇。他们也根据学习者的反应调整自己的话语。如果他们注意到学习者没有听懂，也会重复自己的话，或改变表达方式，或把要传达的信息加以扩展。

——与母亲-儿童接触所不同的是，课堂上的交际总是按照严格的三段式进行：教师提问，学习者作出反应，教师给学习者提供反馈。例如：

提问: Is the clock on the wall?

反应: Yes (it is.) (The clock is on the wall.)

反馈: Good. The clock is on the wall.

——教师提出许多不真实的问题，也就是教师和学习者都事先知道答案的问题。结果，只能训练学习者不自然地使用语言。只教给他们如何回答问题，而不教他们如何开始一席谈话。

——在第二语言环境中，谈论的内容往往是没有趣味的，与学习者的需要和兴趣没有什么关系。

——讲话最多的是教师，而不是学习者。

7.5.3 保姆式语言与教师式语言的对比

比较一下母语环境与第二语言环境，便可发现，教师式语言：

——强调产生出语法正确的语言形式。教师对学习者的要表达的内容并不感兴趣。使用第二语言不讲究实际，只是为了练习语言结构，不是为了去做学习者希望或需要用该语言去做的事情。

——教师式语言不集中谈论学习者的“当时、当地”情况，其内容对成年或青年学习者来讲没有直接的关系和趣味。

——由于以上原因，教师式语言不给学习者提供什么机会去试验自己用所学语言结构能做什么。所以，学习者没有机会获取实实在在的的证据，以证明自己的第二语言水平在提高。这很可能对学习动力有不良影响。

大部分第二语言输入和输出强调形式的正确性，而不关心形式能够表达的意义和有什么用途。结果往往是这样：学习者在被动识别语法正确的形式上似乎水平相差无几，但使用这些形式的的能力则有很大差别。

母语的输入和输出从一开始就注重形式所表达的意义。交际有其真实的目的，这个目的对参与者是重要的，是有趣味的。这种交际所完成的功能范围和表达的各种意图，随着儿童的认知能力的发

展而不断扩大。结果是，本族语者既能识别语法正确的母语，又能在各种各样的场合中得体地使用母语来表达自己想要传达的意义。

7.5.4 保姆式语言和教师式语言对语言本质的揭示

1. 从儿童时期开始语言就用于做要做的事情，谈论自己感兴趣的内容，询问有用的或者有趣的信息。

2. 为了使用（口头）语言，人们必须既是高效率的听话人，又是高效率的讲话人。他们不仅要能够在听懂别人的基础上做出回答，而且要能够开始一席谈话。

3. 人们根据自己认为听话人能听懂多少，自然而然地调整自己的语言。讲话人要有足够的敏感性，要意识到别人能否听懂自己的话。

7.5.5 保姆式语言和教师式语言对语言教学的启示

教师不能仅仅为学习者提供机械的课堂练习的机会。如果第二语言学习与母语习得有相同之处的话，那么，学习者得到的语言输入和练习产生第二语言的机会，应该能使他们建立和检验有关该语言在实际生活中如何运用的假设。实际上，这就意味着教师应该做以下几件事：

——从一开始上课，教师就应尽量使用第二语言来组织课堂活动或进行社会交往。课堂活动毕竟构成一种真实的、自然发生的社会环境。

——开始让学生产生第二语言时，让他们谈论“当时、当地”的事情。课堂本身有不少相关的谈论内容：学习者自己——相貌，家庭，衣着，兴趣爱好等；教室内的物品——其形状，大小，颜色，制作材料等。课堂之外的题目也可拿来谈论。

——设计一些语言活动，让学习者清楚地看到形式与意义之间的关系，有些活动是要求他们用语言做事情，以表明学习者理解了

所听到或读到的材料；有些活动则要求他们运用口头语言去达到某种目标。

小结

本章中我们讨论了以下问题：

1. 儿童习得母语时不是仅仅靠“照抄”听到的语言。儿童似乎生来具有“语言习得机制”。这种机制中的基本信息是关于一切语言所共有的语法结构特征。儿童利用这种基本信息，通过听和说，建立母语的结构规则。他们是“创造性地构建”自己的母语。

2. 学习者的语言错误表明，错误的数量和种类不能用母语与目的语之间的同异去解释。以母语与目的语区别最大的方面为基础去教授第二语言，不能保证学生能有效地学习这种语言。

3. 用一种统一、不变的方法把错误进行分类决非易事。“整体”错误影响到句内或句子之间的意义关系，往往会导致交际失误。“局部”错误只影响到句内组成成分的意义，不会影响语言的整体可理解性。所以，教师和学习者需要特别注意“整体”错误。

4. 绝大多数第二语言学习者，不论他们花多长时间学习，很少能象儿童一样达到习得母语的水平。这说明，对大多数第二语言学习者来说，把目的语本族人语言水平当成自己的学习目标是不现实的。他们做不到这一点的原因将在第九章讨论。

5. 据信，第二语言学习者能“创造性地构建”自己的独特的过渡语。在整个学习过程的任一时刻，每个学习者的过渡语都包括他已正确识别并存于长期记忆的语言结构。在正确识别的语言结构的数目上，在实际生活中能把这些结构用于恰当的情景范围上，不同学习者会有很大区别。所以，同一个班的学习者，接收的语言输入相同，语言输出的机会也相同，但往往有些人的过渡语比其他人发展得好些。

6. 教师知道第二语言学习者产生语言时，其正确程度并不是每次都一样的。往往有这种情况：某一形式在相当一段时间内使用是正确的，似乎已经学会，但后来又用错了。其原因可能与使用情景有关。在塔伦的语言能力连续体上，**拘泥体**的使用容易比较正确，因为常常有时间检查所说或所写的话。在拘泥体上使用正确的俗语到了**俗体**中也许用错了，原因是时间紧迫。一个明显的例子是中国人学习使用的英语代词中的**he**和**she**。写作中这两个代词往往能正确使用，在会话中似乎是随便使用的；有时对，有时错。

7. 儿童在正常语言环境中习得母语。母亲用母语与儿童交际时都有真实的、直接的目的，并期待儿童做出反应。最初，自然是母亲讲话多些，不过随着儿童的认知能力不断提高，他们之间讲话多少也趋于平衡。母亲纠正儿童的回答时，主要是注意其社会得体性，不是注意语法形式。大部分第二语言学习者在课堂环境学习语言。教师与学习者之间的交往常常是不自然的，所谈的内容也很少与学习者的真正兴趣有关。课堂上的讲话往往由教师发起，很少鼓励学习者主动运用第二语言。评判学习者的语言时，往往看其形式是否准确，而不看其是否基本上达到了交际目的。

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第八章 课堂学习的益处

阅读本章之前，请先考虑如何回答下列问题：

1. 在什么情况下，不用课堂教授，也不用做有控制的练习，就能学会第二语言的结构规则？在中国，这种情况存在吗？
 2. 在课堂上正式教授第二语言的结构能否影响：
 - ① 学习结构的顺序？
 - ② 学习结构的速度？
 - ③ 最后达到的第二语言水平？
 3. 是否所有的第二语言学习者对这种语言的全部结构要掌握得同样熟练？
 4. 在中国的第二语言学习环境中，强调准确性的练习活动和强调流利性的练习活动，各占多大比例才算合适？这种比例是否应该一成不变，还是应该随着学习阶段的不同而有所变化？
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8.1 有何证据反对课堂上学习第二语言结构

在第七章我们提到，研究者发现，第二语言学习者所犯错误与母语习得者所犯的 error 十分相似。于是有人提出，不能期望第二语言学习者（像母语习得者一样）通过正式语法课程学会这种语言，而是要通过在第二语言环境中自然地交往，不断进行假设建立和假设检验，来自然地习得自己的过渡语。这种第二语言环境可以是真实的，也可以是在课堂上组织起来的。语素习得研究也表明，第二

语言习得过程中正式课堂教学收益甚微。探讨儿童习得第二语言（英语）的词素顺序的第一项主要研究是1973年和1974年杜勒和柏特进行的。接着，于1975年贝雷，马顿和克拉什又对学习英语的成人作了相似的研究。这两项研究都是用的**双语句法测量法**，即被试者与研究者进行自然会话，但所提的问题事先已设计好，目的是诱导被试者使用第二语言的某种结构。例如，要想检验单数第三人称动词后面的-s，就给被试者看一幅漫画，上面是个肥胖的男孩，然后问被试者这个男孩为什么这样胖。预料中的回答有：**because he eats too much**或**because he lies in bed all day**。将会话录下音来，再听写成文字，然后评分：看在必须使用某项结构时有多少是用对的。这两项研究结果表明，所测到的词素，儿童和成人的习得顺序十分相似。后来，又有50多项类似的研究表明，不论学习者的年龄多大或其母语是何种语言，把英语作为第二语言学习时，习得某些语法词素的顺序基本相同。

克拉什（1982）列出9项语法词素，声称把英语作为第二语言学习时，这9项的习得顺序是不变的，所以叫“自然顺序”。这9项分为四组，如下表所示：

第一组	现在进行时的-ing 复数中的-s 系动词be	（如 boy running） （如 two books） （如 he is big）
第二组	助动词be 冠词 a 和 the	（如 he is running）
第三组	不规则动词的过去时	（如 she went）
第四组	规则动词过去时 单数第三人称中的-s 所有格中的-s	（如 she stopped） （如 she stops） （如 the girl's food）

研究证明，在习得过程中，总是首先习得第一组中的词素，接

着习得第二组中的词素，然后才是第三组、第四组。在“自然顺序”中不能跳跃式地习得，例如不能从第二组跳到第四组。

在探讨学习英语的疑问句和否定式的研究中，又有证据表明第二语言习得遵循某种自然顺序。学习这两种语法现象，不论学习者的母语是哪种语言，都要经过四个阶段。例如，学习疑问句的四个阶段如下表所示：

把英语作为第二语言学习时疑问句的发展顺序

阶 段	例 句
1.用升调	(He work today?)
2.特殊问句不变语序	(What he [is] saying?)
3.语序调换过分	(Do you know what is it?)
4.第二语言系统	(Does she like what she does?)

(见Larsen-Freeman, 1991: 93)

由于以上证据表明，不管学习者的年龄和母语如何，第二语言习得有一种普遍的发展顺序，于是人们开始怀疑在课堂上正式教授第二语言的结构到底有没有必要，到底有没有益处。有的研究者，特别是克拉什（见8.3.1节）争辩说，既然不论正式教授与否，英语学习者习得英语语法时的顺序是固定的，那么这种正式的课堂教学是不值得进行的。

8.2 第二语言结构的正式课堂教学

中国和全世界的第二语言教学正是通过正式课堂教学而进行的，重点放在讲解语言的结构上，所以有必要认真探讨课堂教学对第二语言习得过程是否确实有作用。

8.2.1 正式课堂教学与第二语言语法项目的习得顺序

有证据表明,总的说来,在课堂上正式教授语法结构不会影响学习这些结构的顺序。费斯曼(1975a)调查了260个6-15岁的儿童,他们的母语不同,都在美国学习英语。有的儿童在校用英语听课,有的没有。在对学习者进行的口语表达测试中,费斯曼发现,对于所测验的语法词素,他们的习得顺序没有区别。艾丽斯(1984)调查了3个儿童,其母语为旁遮普语或葡萄牙语,在美国用听说法学习英语。艾丽斯发现,就他所调查的结构而言,3个儿童的习得顺序与文献上所说的自然习得者的顺序是相似的。皮尼曼(1984)调查了10个意大利儿童,年龄为7-9岁,用两周时间教他们德语的主语-动词调换结构。一方面教他们实际语法规则,一方面做交际练习。两周之后,分析了儿童的自然讲话,看他们是否掌握了主语和动词的调换规则(在习得德语词序的五个阶段中,这是第四个阶段)。结果发现,在实验之前已经能够运用第三阶段的规则的儿童,能够很好地运用第四阶段的词序调换规则了。而自然习得德语的儿童要花几个月的时间才能完成这种过渡。反过来,在实验之前刚刚达到第二阶段的儿童,两周后仍然停留在第二阶段,不能够运用教给他们的调换规则。于是,皮尼曼提出**可学性假设**,就是说,只有当学生“在心理语言学方面准备好”能接受所教结构时,正式课堂教授才能对学生有益。因此,对于处在特定阶段的特定学习者,可学内容制约着可教的内容。在学习者没有达到一定的认知程度时,专门教授一种结构不能帮助他“跳跃”发展顺序中的任何阶段。不过,皮尼曼的证据似乎表明,如果学习者认知已经足够成熟,正式教授可以加快他习得这种结构的速度。

8.2.2 正式课堂教学与习得语法结构的速度

尽管学习者的语言发展道路看来不受正式教授的影响,但是确

有证据表明,学习者习得语法结构的速度与是否对他们明确教授这些结构有关。朗(1983d)分析了11种关于第二语言学习者的研究。学习者接受的正式教授时间相同,与语言的自然接触也相等,或者又有正式学习又有自然接触。他发现,在6种研究中,不论是儿童还是成人,当接受正式教授时,他们的语法知识发展较快。在另两篇报告中,所得结果不太明显,但表明正式教授确实有一定的作用。其余的三项研究中,正式教授对语法知识发展速度影响甚小或根本没有影响。正如前面讨论皮尼曼(1984)时所讲的,习得速度确实受到正式教授的积极影响,但条件是所教的内容必须符合学习者语言发展的水平。韦斯兰德和史蒂弗内(1983)进一步证实了朗的结论。他们调查了579个儿童,都在美国衣阿华州公立小学额外听英语课,作为第二语言学习,听课时数不等。他们发现,经常接受这种特殊课堂教学的儿童比别的儿童英语要好些,尤其在入学前几年更是这样。

所以,从总体来看,有证据表明,在课堂上教授语法规则可以提高习得第二语言语法结构的速度。各种研究结果表明,不论学习者是儿童还是成人,是初学者还是高年级学生,是在第二语言环境中学习,还是在所学语言是外语的环境中学习,都是这种情况。而且,不论测验他们的学习速度时是用综合式测试还是用分立式测试(关于测试,详见第十一章),其结果是一样的。

8.2.3 正式课堂教学与最后达到的第二语言水平

接受过正式课堂教授的学习者最后是否会达到较高的第二语言水平,关于这个问题至今研究甚少。出版过的几种研究结果之一是帕维希(1984)做的。他调查了两组受试者,甲组是48个意大利高中生,年龄14-18岁,正式学过2年或7年的英语语法。其中3人有过非正式的、课外的语言接触。乙组是38个意大利人,在苏格兰的爱丁堡工作过3个月至25年(平均时间为6年),都没有上过正式的

英语课程，但都在各种场合中接触过英语：家庭、工作或娱乐活动。这两组受试对象并不十分对称。乙组的受试者比甲组的年龄大得多，但文化水平和社会经济地位比甲组受试者低。这些差异意味着，乙组受试的最后英语水平要低于甲组。但乙组受试的有利条件是：他们接触英语的时间远远多于甲组听英语课的时间。

帕维希测量受试者的最后英语水平的办法是，让两组受试者口头讲出语法复杂程度不同的关系从句。她发现，甲组受试者比乙组受试者能够准确说出更多的关系从句，而且种类也多些。她的结论是：这并不一定是甲组受试者接受语法结构正式教授的结果。她的调查结果可能说明这样一个事实：甲组在语言输入中接触的语言范围更广些，更复杂些，有些东西是乙组在自然语言环境中不易遇到的语言项目。教师在课堂上用的英语可能比自然的**俗体**包括更广泛的语法形式。所以帕维希认为，甲组被试者很可能最后注意到用于组织课堂教学的语言。一旦注意到，他们就开始建立假设，并加以验证，观察这些语法形式是如何使用的，以及在何种语境中使用等。这种假设迟早会变成过渡语的一部分，到使用时即可以提取。

施密特和福罗特（1986）给帕维希的观察提供了不十分系统的证据。下面的引语讲的是语言学家施密特学习巴西葡萄牙语的情况，他当时详细地记录了自己的过渡语发展过程：

“因此，施密特想要学会使用某一口语形式，只有课堂的教授和练习是不够的。让这种形式仅仅在语言输入中出现也是不够的。施密特必须在语言输入中注意到这种形式……施密特主观上感到，在他的学习过程中，有意识地去注意输入中的内容是学会语言的直接原因。”（Schmidt和 Frota, 1986: 281）

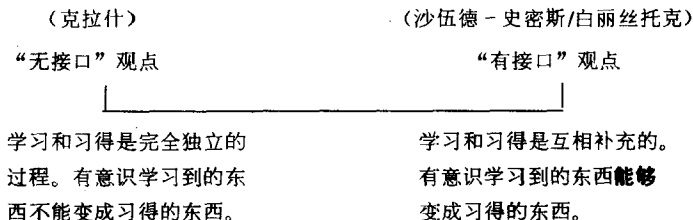
不能断然地说，正式教授语言结构，比只靠自然接触第二语言，就能够使学习者达到更高的语言水平。不过，仅有的证据表明，如果用第二语言进行正式教授的话，比自然语言环境为学习者提供的语言形式范围更广，形式也更复杂。由于课堂教学往往集中

处理语言的形式，学习者很可能在不同程度和不同时间，注意到语言输入的表达形式。如果上面提到的施密特和福罗特的结论是对的，即只有注意到语言形式才能开始加工和习得它们，那么正式教授间接地提供了一种语言环境，对达到更高的语言水平是有利的。

8.3 正式教授如何影响到第二语言习得？

上一节讲到正式教授确实对第二语言习得有所影响，现在讨论这种影响是如何实现的。学习如何影响习得呢？对这一问题，研究者的看法很不一致。大致可分为两派（见图10）：

图10



8.3.1 “无接口”的观点：克拉什

克拉什(1982a)是“无接口”观点的最激进的倡导者。他认为，正式学习语法规则根本不可能影响到学习者习得这些规则。这里所讲的习得的含义是：不论在什么场合，学习者能够迅速地、流利地、灵活地运用这些规则进行交往。他认为，正式教授所学习的知识只能用于能够进行有意识的监控的场合。这种使用更多出现在语言能力连续体的拘泥体一端，如在使用文字语言时。而在俗体一端，如在正常的口语交往中，则没有时间监控语言输出，所以只有习得的东西能用得上，学习的东西则用不上。

克拉什认为，上文讲到正式教授对语言发展顺序没有影响，这

是不足为奇的，因为这种顺序反映了真正**习得**的普遍规律。如果正式教授有利于习得速度的话，那是因为课堂上的语言输入保证让学习者听得懂。所以，他们在课堂上始终是在接触能听得懂的语言。相比之下，从自然语言环境中得到的语言输入，有些听得懂，有些听不懂，对初学者尤其如此。

为了证明真正的习得不受课堂**学习**的影响，而是独立于课堂**学习**，他提醒人们这一事实：许多人在完全没有课堂教授的情况下**习得**第二语言。他的另一个证据是，许多人花好几年的时间在课堂上**学习**语言的结构，但是仍然不能使用这些结构。他还说，通过正式教授，许多优秀的第二语言学习者也只能对语法规则掌握到一定的程度，使用起来仍然很慢；所以正式教授是发展第二语言语法的低效率的办法。

克拉什认为正式教授语法规则基本上是浪费时间。倒不如让学习者在课堂上尽可能多地接触易懂的语言输入，使他们按上述**自然顺序**习得基本规则。语言输入应该保持在*i+1*的水平上（*i=input*），即略微高于学习者目前的**自然顺序**水平。学习者则从目前的自然顺序水平*i*，通过理解包含*i+1*的输入，过渡到*i+1*水平。然后，应该允许学习者以这些自然**习得**的规则为基础，按照自己的速度，通过假设的建立和检验，去习得其他的语言规则。课堂语言输入应该是易懂的、有趣的、与学习者相关的，应该让他们有机会运用已经学会的语言，进行有目的的交际。这样的输入自然而然地会导致语言的**习得**。语言输入不必遵循任何语法顺序，因为自然习得顺序是固定不变的。

前面提到过，试图把克拉什的主张付诸实践的实验大都来自美国。那里的学习者多数是移民，他们有两个有利条件是世界上许多其他第二语言学习环境所不具备的：一个是学生确实迫切需要学习第二语言，一个是学到的东西的确能立刻用于日常生活。我们认为，克拉什的主张在大多数第二语言学习环境中不容易实现，因为

除了以上两个条件（迫切需要和立刻能用），还必须有干劲很大、能随时提供相关的、易懂的语言输入的本族语教师。

8.3.2 “有接口”的观点

“有接口”观点的支持者认为，学习到的东西可以直接帮助习得语言。他们相信，第二语言的新形式既可以象习得母语那样直接习得，又可以在成为习得过渡语之前先有意识地学习而来。他们认为，通过练习可以把单纯学习来的项目转变为充分习得的项目。下面讨论“有接口”观点中的两种看法。

沙伍德-史密斯（1981）代表着与克拉什相对的另一极端。他曾说：

“大部分即席语言运用来自于练习。在实际适用目的语的过程中，学习者获得对其结构的驾御，使他们能迅速地、不加思考地运用它们。”（1981：166）

与克拉什一样，沙伍德-史密斯把最终学习目标（语言的习得）看成是既能在实际生活交往中准确地使用语言（俗体），也能在比较闲暇的语境中准确地使用语言（拘泥体）。但是他认为，要达到这种水平，在课堂上正式教授语法规则是十分必要的。他争辩说，学习先于习得，又是习得的重要组成部分。他认为，对于青年和成人学习者来说，明确教授语法是达到准确、流利的交际能力的捷径。集中精力学习过语法、并有很多机会在有意境的语境中练习使用语法的学习者，更有可能把语法规则牢牢地储存在长期记忆之中。一旦牢记之后，这些规则便可用于语法正确的、流利的交际之中，而且如有可能，还可以用于通过在语言环境中的交往继续习得语言。

一开始，语言输入应以讲语法为主。应该包括明确地讲解语法规则，还要提供大量机会练习使用这些规则。练习既有机械地操练，又有运用所学规则去做事情，以便认识语法规则与实际生活的

关系。

白丽丝托克（1982）采取介于克拉什与沙伍德-史密斯之间的立场。她说，不同学习者需要不同的语言水平，在语言能力连续体上需要达到不同的程度。这些不同的要求决定着语言输入中正式讲授和自然习得的机会各占多大比例。

她指出，在语言能力连续体的任何刻度上，学习者对于任何结构规则的知识，都将随着以下两点的变化而变化：

1. 这项规则已被**分析**到什么程度，就是说，学习者使用这项规则时能够灵活到什么程度；

2. 这项规则的**自动化**程度，就是说，产生这项规则时能有多么迅速，多么准确。

不同的语言活动需要不同类型的知识。

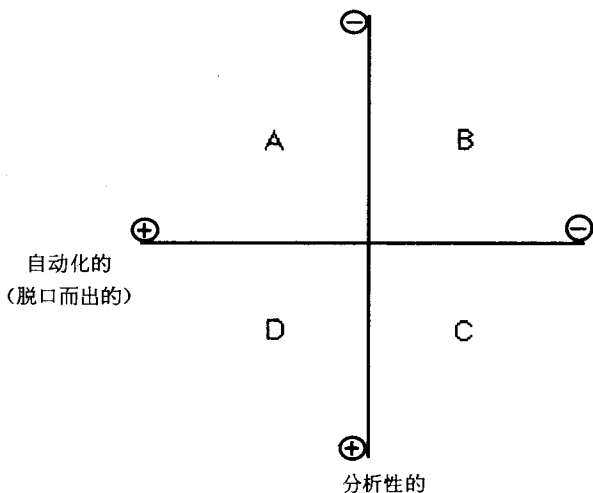


图11 分析性的与自动化的语言的运用（白丽丝托克，1982）

最困难的语言活动既需要已被分析过的知识，又需要自动化了的知识（见图11中的D部分），最容易的语言活动所需要的知识既不用经过详细分析，又不用很高程度的自动化（见图11中的B部分）。自然习得者和儿童学习者在开始学习第二语言时，可能只具备B部分的知识，以后再向A部分过渡。也就是说，他们能够流利地运用所学的知识，但在语法运用上未必十分灵活。帕维希的住在苏格兰的意大利被试者，就属于这一类学习者，他们只能讲出简单的关系从句。在课堂上正式学习第二语言的人很可能从C部分开始，然后向D部分过渡。因此这类学习者最终能够既流利又灵活地运用语言。

教师在考虑某组学习者是需要更多的正式学习，还是需要更多的自然习得时，“……必须考虑学习者的具体学习目标，给他们提供合适的知识以达到他们的目标。”（Bialystock, 1982: 205）如果学习者的目标是能够参加自然会话，那么他们需要集中学习俗体语言，所学的语言可以脱口而出，但未必经过详细分析。对于这种学习者，比如移居美国的人，克拉什式的语言输入最为合适：即强调交际需要、在课堂上提供交际机会。如果学习者既需要会用拘泥体又需要用俗体，比如中国的英语本科学生，那么，他们要学习的知识既是自动化的，又是经过分析的。要做到这一点，最好的办法是在课堂上集中地正式教授语言结构，至少开始阶段应该是这样。

我们认为，“有接口”的观点比克拉什的“无接口”的观点更有道理。它不仅承认不同学习者有不同的需要，而且适用于更多的第二语言学习环境。

8.3.3 有关正式学习的影响的证据对语言本质的揭示

1. 如果一个学习者已经完全习得了第二语言中的某项结构规则，那么这项规则一定是经过分析的，而且是到了自动化的程度。要达到这个程度，这项规则必须牢牢存入长期记忆之中。不同的语

言学习环境（包括第二语言环境、母语环境中接触本族人语言输入的机会多少，这种语言输入是第一手的还是第二手的）为学习者提供了不同数量的机会，帮助这种记忆得以实现。但不论语言环境如何，也不管学习者的母语是何种语言，学习英语的简单语法词素、疑问句、否定式时，似乎有一种普通的习得顺序。

2. 不论语言环境如何，正式教授语法规则似乎不会影响习得上语法词素的顺序。集中教授结构可以提高习得这些词素的速度，但教授内容必须正好适合学习者的可学性水平。

8.3.4 有关正式学习的影响的证据对语言教学的启示

1. 如果语言学习环境是把英语（或其他语言）作为外语来学，在大多数情况下，通过交往而习得语言的机会很少，语言学习必然以课堂教学为基础。因此，不论帕维希（1984）的结论正确与否，有充分的理由使用第二语言授课。看来，在课堂上为了真正的交际目的而使用的第二语言越多（如用于教课、组织课堂、聊天），学习者接触到的可听懂的语言输入种类也就越多。接触真正语言越多，学生收益越大。

2. 在课堂上，花多少时间进行正式学习和机械练习第二语言结构，取决于学习语言的目的是什么。在中国，学习者一般要用拘泥体处理大量文字语言（英语本科学生也是如此），因此正式教授和有控制的学习第二语言的结构是必要的。但是，只进行这两次活动还不足以把这些结构存入长期记忆。有必要从一开始就给学习者提供机会，在各种接受性和产生性的环境中练习使用所学知识去做事情。

3. 正式教授和机械练习结构形式，与在实际生活中自由练习运用结构形式之间的比例，可能会随着学习者水平的提高而发生变化。

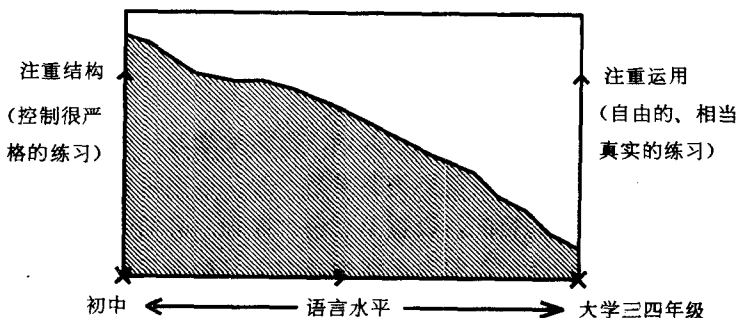


图12 注重语言结构和注重语言运用

（在中国外语学习条件下可以这样设计）

刚入初中时，课堂教学偏重于语言结构的正式学习，到大学最后两年，课堂上大部分时间让学生运用所学知识。这些活动要尽量接近于学生毕业后可能遇到的实际语言环境。

小结

本章中，我们讨论了以下问题：

1. 有些人不用正式学习结构规则也能习得第二语言。他们一般生活在第二语言环境之中，并迫切需要懂得这种语言。在语言能力连续体的俗体一端，他们是流利的交际者，但在拘泥体一端很可能会犯语法错误。中国没有习得第二语言的有利条件。

2. 第二语言习得研究表明，正式教授语言结构

- ① 不会影响习得8.1节中提到的语法形式的顺序；
- ② 可以提高习得这些语法形式的速度，只要学习者已经在认知上有足够的准备。
- ③ 可能会影响到学习者最后达到的语言水平。在课堂专门

教授形式会使学生特别注意外语结构的形式。

一旦学生有意识地去注意形式，他们即可利用这些形式来建立和检验假设，这样有利他们习得语言结构。

3. 学习者要想使用第二语言的话，都必须**学习（或习得）**该语言的基本结构规则。这些规则需要学习多深，运用时需要多准确，都取决于学习语言的目的。设置第二语言课程，必须考虑学习者为什么要学习这种语言，还要考虑结构规则学习和练习各占多大分量最适合他们的学习目的。

4. 在语言学习项目中，准确性（即语言的形式）和流利性（即语言的运用）各占的比重，随着时间的推移而有所变化。如果学习者没有特殊的学习目的，在大多数情况下是先强调准确性，以后再强调流利程度（参见图11）。

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第九章 语言学习者的个人差异

阅读本章之前，请先考虑如何回答下列问题：

1. 开始学习第二语言时的年龄是否影响最后能够达到的语言水平？
 2. 优秀语言学习者是否具有某种特殊的语言学习素质？如果有的话，这种素质包括哪些能力？
 3. 要学好第二语言，学习动力的重要性如何？
 4. 什么样的个人性格有利于或不利于第二语言学习？
 5. 能否教给学习者如何学习语言？如果可以，教给他们什么样的学习策略才有利于学习？
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前两章我们讨论的是在第二语言习得中与广大学习者有关的几个方面。现在的讨论是把学习者看作不同的个人，各自有自己的优势和劣势。本章讨论个人之间可能会在哪些方面存在区别，这些差异对他们学习其他语言时的方法和速度会产生什么影响。

9.1 第二语言习得中年龄的影响

常常有人研究年龄对第二语言习得的影响。一方面是因为年龄这个变量很容易识别，另一方面这对第二语言如何习得的理论问题也很重要。如果有证据表明，儿童与成人习得第二语言的过程完全相同，那么克拉什的“自然模式”就找到了依据。反过来，如果发现年龄是影响学习进度和最后达到的第二语言水平的一个因素，那

么就应该承认，第二语言习得过程不只有一个模式，而有多个模式。历时较长的研究项目表明，儿童时期开始学习第二语言的人最后达到的语言水平比较高。在发音方面尤其如此。幼年就开始学习的人，讲起话来已听不出与本族语者有什么区别。也有证据表明，儿童时期开始学习的人在口头表达中句法比较准确。

欧亚马(1976)调查了60名移居美国的意大利人。他们于6-20岁之间到达美国，已经在美国居住了5-18年。欧亚马发现，只有在12岁之前到达美国的人讲起话来带美国人口音。而在美国居住的时间长短对口音并没有影响。帕索夫斯基(1980)把67名移民美国的即席讲话录音听写了五分钟。这些移民到达美国时的年龄很不一样，但都已经在美国居住了五年。帕索夫斯基把听写记录交给两位训练有素的美国人去评阅，评出零分(不懂英语)到5分(英语本族语者水平)的成绩。他发现，到达美国时比较年轻的人，语法准确性的得分最高。梅杰(1987)调查过不同语言水平的成人学习者，看他们的发音能否混充为本族语者的发音。他的被试者是53名讲葡萄牙语的巴西成人和7名讲英语的本族人。请了10名美国人作裁判，让他们听每名被试者讲的三个短语，按他们的“外国腔”打分。没有任何一位巴西人得分高于讲英语的本族人，而且两组的分数差距相当大。这些结果表明，儿童时期开始学习第二语言的人，比到青年或成人才开始学习的人更有希望最后达到本族语者的发音和语法水平。

但是，也有证据表明，在习得第二语言初期，许多年纪较大的学习者用较少的时间通过了句法和形态等初期阶段，而儿童用的时间要多些。这并不奇怪，因为成人的认知能力和智力发展都高于儿童，他们能较快地识别和掌握语言的结构规则。不过，即使在这方面，如果语言接触量相同，年轻的成人仍比年长的成人学得更快些。

所以，总的说来，凡是比较两组第二语言学习者，只要一组开

始较早，另一组开始较晚，经过几年的学习之后或在第二语言环境居住几年之后，开始较早的人的语言水平总是高于开始较晚的人。因此，不论是正式学习还是自然习得，从儿童时期开始学习是一个有利条件。

9.1.1 年龄影响第二语言习得的原因

年龄为什么会影响到第二语言习得，已经提出了或多或少相互关联的几个原因。哪一个原因（或哪几个原因的总和）是最有影响的，到目前为止还没有一致看法。这些原因可以分为三组。第一组关系到人类大脑的发展。列尼伯格（1967）在《关键期假设》一书中说，人出生后的10-12年，即在青春期以前，习得语言是容易的，因为这时的大脑是“有弹性的”，是灵活的；大脑中的语言功能还没有经过侧化而移至左半球。这时整个大脑都能参与语言习得，所以学习者吸收新的语言信息就快些，容易些。年龄大的第二语言学习者只能利用大脑的左半球加工语言，而且大脑也不再那么灵活，所以吸收新的思想和信息就比较困难。所以，他们不可能达到在**关键期**之内开始学习第二语言的人的水平。

第二组原因涉及到儿童和成人的不同认知发展阶段所造成的差异。据说，儿童学习者象学习母语一样利用“语言习得机制”来学习第二语言。处于认知发展的这一阶段时，他们与语言发生关系时全看语言能做什么，而不看语言是什么。他们的大脑还不适合开始正式学习语言的系统。成人学习者的认知发展比较成熟，能够而且愿意去有意识地学习语言规则。这种区别说明为什么在学习初期成人的语言能力比儿童发展得快。不过到了后期，年龄大的学习者很难过渡到用所学知识去做事情。

第三组原因涉及到社会-心理因素。据说，使用第二语言时，成人比儿童更拘束一些。他们不愿意练习使用所学的语言。结果，他们很难达到本族语者的发音水平和流利程度。此外，成年人，特别

是生活在第二语言环境中有关安全感的移民，宁愿保留自己的母语群体身份，讲第二语言时故意带某种口音，以表明自己是某一个母语群体的成员。儿童使用第二语言时远非如此拘束，在第二语言环境中他们很容易找到机会与本族语儿童一起玩，因而练习发音的机会较多。而且，儿童从成人那里得到的语言输入质量较高，表达也更清楚。所以他们获得的语言样本更清楚，能从中习得准确的句法。

9.1.2 年龄在第二语言习得中的作用对语言本质的揭示

语言的不同方面在认知发展到不同水平时才能被人理解。关于语言是一种系统的意识，成人比儿童要强些。

9.1.3 年龄在第二语言习得中的作用对语言教学的启示

1. 成人和儿童习得第二语言时的过程不完全相同。儿童学习外语时比较自然，很象习得母语那样；而成人学习时则不是这种情况。这些区别意味着，不可能只有一种放之四海而皆准的第二语言习得理论。学习环境和生活环境不同，使习得第二语言的速度不同，最终所达到的水平也不同。

2. 学习任何外语，最理想的开始年龄是在关键期结束之前，因为那时的大脑仍保留着早期的灵活性。这时学习者的认知发展已比较成熟，足以对语言系统进行分析，而同时又对使用所学语言不感到拘束。据说，8-9岁是开始学外语的最佳年龄。

3. 第二语言的教学大纲和学习材料都应该因学习者的年龄不同而不同。对成人初学者不应象对儿童初学者那样，教材应该更集中教授语言的形式。

9.2 智力和语言学能

9.2.1 智力

据信，人的一般智力决定着人的学习新技能的总能力。一般智力经常缩写为g。有些研究者说，智力测验可以预示第二语言习得的成败。其他研究者认为，另有一种单独的心理实体决定着我们学习语言的能力。

纽菲尔德（1978），奥乐和波金斯（1979）宣布，专门的语言学能是不存在的，一个人的一般智力水平可以预示最终达到的第二语言水平。把语言学能与一般智力完全等同起来的观点，从来没有被完全接受，因为学习母语时不是这种情况。习得母语的儿童的智力有很大差别，但他们都会成为水平相当的本族语者。

卡明斯（1979）对智力与第二语言水平的关系作了比较深刻的解释。他区分了本族语者都具有两种独立的语言能力。第一是**认知和学术语言能力（CALP）**。这种语言能力学术性更强些，包括识别语言的形式，以及在较长的口语或文字材料中识别结构形式之间的关系。判断认知和学术语言能力的水平时，就看本族语者对语法了解多少，词汇量有多大，以及准确和灵活运用这种知识的能力。在学术性活动中，这种能力典型地表现在完成测试和练习的能力上，以及完成较长的笔头作业和论文的能力上。卡明斯说，运用这种语言的能力受到一个人的一般智力的影响，本族人使用母语时在不同程度上具有这种能力。卡明斯区分的第二种语言能力叫做**基本人际交流技能（BICS）**。这些技能决定着口语的流利程度和得体地使用语言进行交流的能力。正常的本族语者都具有这种能力，并且不受一般智力的影响。

吉尼西和艾克斯特兰（1976）在卡明斯之前就做了实验，其结果符合卡明斯的观点。他们调查了本族人和非本族人的语言水平，

并与他们的智力测验分数相比较。他们发现，一般智力与本族人的阅读、语法、词汇等水平有密切的关系，但与其口语水平关系不大。对非本族人来说，一般智力与其阅读理解、听写、自由写作等水平有相关关系，与其口语和听力没有相关关系。实验似乎表明，一般智力测验能够预示与**认知和学术语言能力**方面有关的第二语言的最后水平，但不能预示与**基本人际交流技能**有关的最后水平。

9.2.2 语言学能

仅仅依据一般智力不能可靠地预示最后的综合语言能力。据说，还有一种与生俱来的能力，有些人有，有些人却没有；有人比别人多些；这种能力使某些人成为优秀的第二语言学习者。这种能力被称为**语言学能**。

至今已有两种著名的语言学能测验，都是60年代由北美人设计的。据说，它们可以识别出语言学能的组成成分，并能测量这些成分，这两套测验都反映了当时流行的结构主义语言观。一套是J.B.卡罗尔的《现代语言学能测验》（MLAT），另一套是皮姆斯乐的《语言学能试题组》（LAB）。每套题又有几个组成部分。有人说，这几个组成部分可以测量一个人学习语言的综合能力。

《现代语言学能测验》把语言学能分成四种独立的能力，由五套小题来测量。这四种能力是：

语音编码能力——能够识别不同的音，建立声音及其代表符号之间的联系，并记住这些联系。

语法敏感性——能够识别词和短语在句中的语法功能。

记忆能力——能够很快地学会声音与意义之间的联系，并能记住这些联系。

演义学习能力——能够找出制约某组语言材料的规则——如果所提供的材料样品允许进行这种推理的话。

《语言学能试题组》把学能分成三个组成部分，用六套小题来

由于这种片面性,使用这些测验的人越来越少,因为人们对语言能力的看法更加全面了,这也包括使用所学语言形式的的能力。到目前为止,还没有人设计一种语言学能测验来预示使用外语的能力。

韦奇(1981)曾报告过用这些学能测验做的一项实验。依据被试者在这两套学能测验中的分数,再加上面试,然后把被试者分成三组来学习英语。对各组采用不同的教学方法。第一组的学生在学能测验中,每一部分的得分都比较正常,对他们采用**视听法**教授。这种方法与**听说法**相似,让学生记忆对话,教对话时放幻灯;然后用所记的内容做口语操练。第二组学生是在**语法敏感性**一项上得分特别高的人。对他们采用的是**分析法**。先是明确地讲解语法,然后再做练习。一切学习活动都放在有意义的情景之中。第三组是在语音编码和记忆两项中得分很高的学生。对他们采用的是**功能-情景法**。语言项目都按不同情景组织起来,并按结构复杂程度系统地分出难易先后。强调在人与人的交往中使用语言。实验结束时,所有的学习者对自己班上的教学都十分满意。视听组和分析组之间的最后语言水平没有显著差别。功能-情景组的情况不太明朗。实验结果表明,迄今为止,语言学能测验可能有一种作用尚未探讨:可以用它来找出哪些学生有相同的优势或相似的弱点让他们一起学习,采用能照顾其各自需要的教学方法。至今,还没有人发表过有关语言学能测验的类似报告。

9.2.3 语言学能研究对语言本质的揭示

人可能具有两种独立的语言能力,分别负责语言能力连续体上的两端。一切智力正常的人都在母语中发展与人交往时的交流技能。这主要涉及到人们交往时用的口头语言,它属于连续体上的俗体一端。至于母语中的认知和学术语言能力,每个人的发展则有很大差距。这种能力主要表现在正式的、准确的、往往是文字的语言上,具有连续体上的拘泥体的特征。用一般智力测验也许能预示人

的认知和学术语言能力的水平。

9.2.4 语言学能研究对语言教学的启示

1. 对于语言能力构成成分的看法,随着时间的推移而发生变化。声称衡量语言能力的测试往往不能反映这些构成成分。上文提到的语言学能测验和目前流行的许多语言测验,多数只能预示或测量认识正确语法形式和词项的能力,不能预示或测量运用语言知识的能力。由于大部分课堂语言教学的成败是以学习者在语言测试中的成败来衡量的,所以只测量语言知识的测验对课堂活动会产生极坏的影响。现在越来越多的人认为,语言能力既包括语言知识,又包括能够自然地、得体地运用语言知识去做事情。只有语言测验开始反映出对语言能力的最新观点时,课堂教学才会随之发生变化。

(参见第十一章)

2. 某一组第二语言学习者需要进行多少认知和学术语言能力的训练,需要多少与别人交往的语言技能训练,要视其学习目的而定。例如,目前中国的中学生大都只需要进行认知和学术语言能力训练,以便通过高校招生考试。另一方面,准备到饭店当服务员的学习者只需要与别人交往的语言技能。准备到国外以外交官或商务工作人员的身份代表中国的学习者,可能两种语言能力的训练都需要。为特定类型的学习者而设计的教学大纲和教材,必须反映出学习者对不同类型语言的需要。

9.3 动力和态度

9.3.1 动力

决定第二语言学习者学习动力的最主要因素是什么?在这方面人们已经做了大量研究。看来,最重要的变量是:学习者学好这种语言后得到什么鼓励。或者说,他们将如何回答这两个问题:“成功

的话我将得到什么？”“失败的话我将失去什么？”

“假设大多数学生必须懂得某种外语才能使自己达到某种目标，那么大多数人会学习这种语言。”（Cooper, 1981: 133）

斯特维克（1971）提出，第二语言学习班一定要有自己的“优势”，利用它能为优秀学习者提供的鼓励，来施加自己的“影响”。换句话说，学习者花些力气学习这种语言是值得的，学好之后是会有收获的。他说，一种语言学习班可对学习者提供五种鼓励，来提高学习者的动力和学习成绩。

如果这个学习班有以下特点，那么就有“优势”来施加“影响”：

1. 相关性：学习者认为大纲的内容与他们学习语言的原因是相关的。
2. 完整性：学习者要达到自己的目标所需要的语言内容都已包括了。
3. 真实性：所用的教材在语言上和文化上都是真实、地道的。
4. 令人满意的：每次离开教室，学习者都感到来上课是有收获的。
5. 有用的：走出教室就能立刻用上刚刚学的知识。

如果英语是作为外语来教的，同时提供以上鼓励是不太可能的。如果英语是第二语言，则还有可能。在任何情况下，我们应该牢记以上的第1、2、4三种鼓励。

要想使动力因素真正起作用，学习者需要有学习第二语言的目的或动机。学习要有个目标。从50年代到80年代，兰勃特进行了30多年的一系列实验。他发现学习者学习一种第二语言可能有两大类动力。

第一类通常称为“工具性动力”。这种动力在学习外语情况下比学习第二语言更为典型。这就是说，学习者往往是在母语环境中

学习另一种语言，学习目的与做生意、政府管理、学术研究有关系。在母语环境中若能使用另一种语言，在特权、社会地位或经济收入等方面会给他们带来好处。因此，有工具性动力的学习者有很具体的、个人的、可以辨认的学习目的。他们的目标很明确，要达到自己的目标就必须学会另一种语言。学好这种语言会在自己的社会中直接给他们带来实惠。

另一类动力叫做“结合性动力”。这种动力通常是在第二语言环境中学习第二语言。有这种动力的学习者是为了使自己更象第二语言社团的一个成员，或作为一个成员被社团所接受。这种学习者希望与社团“结合”，而不再是一个明显的局外人。

目前在中国，大多数外语学习者的动力显然是工具性的。学习者希望将来在国内所从事的事业中，其外语知识会给自己带来益处。有些中国学习者在学习某些语言时（如美国英语）也许有结合性动力的成分；他们非常欣赏那种语言的文化，因为他们往往把那种文化理想化了。

9.3.2 态度

在动力的背后，支撑（或破坏）这种动力的是各种态度：对学习本身的态度，对第二语言文化的态度，对其使用者的态度。成人和青年学习者的学习动力（特别是在把英语作为第二语言的环境中）受到对第二语言本族人的态度的强烈影响。学习者自己的态度可能受到父母、同辈人或教师的态度的影响。如果学习者对第二语言本族人持肯定态度，学习动力就会大些，学习成绩也会好些。看来，态度是可以随着时间不同而变化的。赫曼（1980）调查了750名学习英语的德国儿童和青年。她发现，已经学习5年以上的学生比刚开始学习的学生，对第二语言文化持更肯定的态度。她还发现，学习水平越高的学生，对第二语言文化越是持肯定态度。这并不是因为他们一直是持肯定态度，才使他们学习好些。因果关系似

乎相反：语言学得好会培养一种肯定态度。反过来又使他们学得更好。赫曼说：

“学习者从学习进步中得到的满足本身，就可能会影响他对这个语言人种群体的态度，甚至能够改变这一态度。”（1980：249）

年龄很小的儿童一般对语言没有什么态度可言，对第二语言的使用者也不会产生什么强烈的态度。前面讲过，儿童总是生长在哪里就学哪里的语言。麦克纳马拉说：

“把一个儿童突然从多伦多送到柏林，他就会学习德语，不管他对德国人的看法如何。”（1973：37）

9.3.3 关于态度和动力的研究对语言本质的揭示

目的在一切语言使用中都是至关重要的因素。不论学习哪一种第二语言，没有明确的目的是难以学好的。学好这种语言给学习者带来的好处越是实实在在，学习者学好语言的动力也就越大。

9.3.4 关于态度和动力的研究对语言教学的启示

1. 要想使语言教学给学生以动力，就必须首先了解他们学习该语言的目的，然后对其目的作出反应。他们越是感到学习这种语言确有所得，他们的动力就会越大。反之亦然。了解学习者希望学到什么是非常重要的。设计教学大纲和教材时要牢记这一点。一期第二语言学习班的最终目的是要让学习者感到，若是没有参加，他们就得不到对自己有价值的东西。

2. 如果说语言学习中的优秀成绩能够培养学生对第二语言文化的肯定态度，并能促进学习过程本身，那么，越是让学生感到自己的学习进步很快（如让他们知道离自己的目标越来越近），他们继续提高自己的语言水平的动力也就越大。

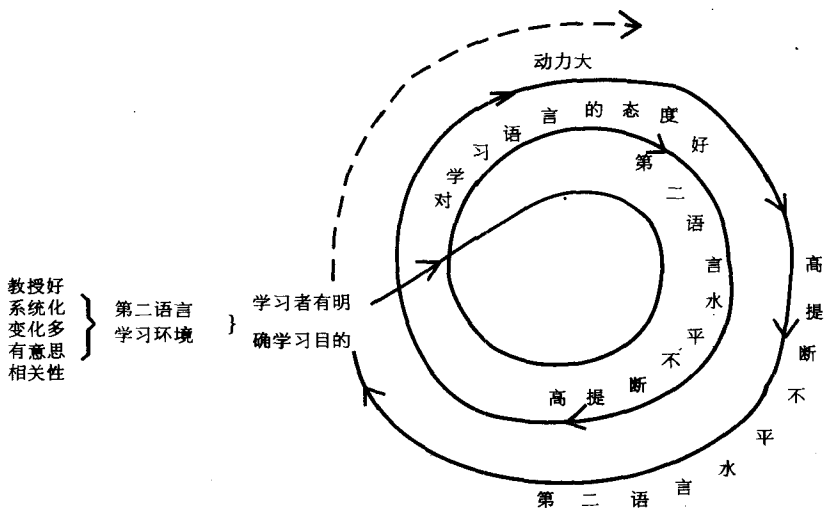


图13 螺旋式动力

9.4 性格因素

9.4.1 课堂上对集体活力的敏感性

一个班的学习者是一组不相同的个人，每个人对教师、教材和其他个人所作出的反应是不相同的。往往有这种情况：有些学习者喜欢某位教师，其他学习者并不一定喜欢；一个班与某位教师十分合作，与另一位教师则不然。有的学习者喜欢正式、对课堂控制很严的教师，或者喜欢各个单元都千篇一律的教科书。而有些学习者可能更喜欢放松的、不拘谨的教师，或者更喜欢变化较多、形式多样的教材。如果学习者、教科书和教师三者之间互相补足，课堂上

的集体活力一定会很好。反之亦然。

在大多数第二语言课堂上，教师和学生是不能互相选择的，所用的教材也不是自己挑选的。他们只能互相适应。但是教师工作的一个主要部分就是创造健康的集体活力。这种健康的气氛可以使学习者在以下三个方面受益：

1. 所有的学习者，包括害羞的人，都会愿意试着使用已学会的语言，而不必担心犯错误、出洋相。

2. 学习者自己即使当时并没与别人交谈，也会注意同学在说些什么，向他们学习，并从教师的讲评中学到东西。

3. 学习者会在课堂组织中相互配合；这种组织在控制不严格的交往活动中是必要的。比如需要调换学习者的座位，或搬动桌椅。如果学习者合作，这很容易做到；如果不合作，就会出现一阵嘈杂，浪费时间，中断教学。

9.4.1.1 集体活力问题对语言本质的揭示

大部分人愿意自由地使用第二语言，而且愿意把自己所学的都用上，但其所处环境必须是舒服的，不受拘束的。相反，如果人们感到紧张，担心会出什么事，那就不能充分利用交往的机会。

9.4.1.2 集体活力问题对语言教学的启示

教师培训班应该强调，教师要创造健康的课堂气氛，这样学生练习使用语言时才不感到害怕，即使自己没有正在使用语言，也会对同学讲的话感兴趣。这样的课堂容易使学生习惯于必要的课堂组织工作。

9.4.2 内向和外向

人们一直认为，性格外向的人学习第二语言会学得更快、更好。一般地讲，外向之人善于交往，喜欢与别人在一起，喜欢变

化, 喜欢热闹。所以人们认为, 外向之人会更愿意在课堂上使用第二语言, 在英语是第二语言的环境中, 课外也会使用英语, 还愿意提问题, 回答问题, 不怕犯错误, 不怕出洋相。尤其在第二语言环境中学习时, 他们上课课下的语言能力是靠克拉什所说的“自然习得”而发展的, 外向的学生会比内向之人更积极地参加语言活动。他们对语言输入更加敏感, 更愿意试着讲出自己的话语, 所以有更多机会建立和检验关于语言结构的假设。结果, 比起不够积极、不够外向的同学, 他们的语言整体能力会发展更快, 水平也会更高。

在英语作为外语而教的环境中, 课堂上集中教授语言结构, 外向的学生可能仍然利用一切机会使用语言, 使其语言更加流利。但是, 在这种情况下, 性格内向的、书生气的、沉默寡言的学生, 由于他们愿意花更多时间去研究和练习语言形式, 因此比外向的学生对语言结构的理解可能会更加全面、准确。

从实验中得到的数据还不足以得出任何结论。原因之一是, 不同研究者在测量内向、外向和语言水平的关系时, 使用的是不同的测量工具。总的说来, 如果测验的是语言运用能力, 语言水平与外向有关系; 如果测验的是语言知识, 语言水平与外向没有关系。

9.4.2.1 内向/外向问题对语言本质的揭示

使用语言时, 流利未必准确, 准确未必流利。有些人的性格自然地趋向于流利, 有的则趋向于准确。

9.4.2.2 内向/外向问题对语言教学的启示

根据学习者的需要:

1. 内向的学生需要一种鼓励性的、不令人害怕的课堂气氛, 这样他们才乐于“冒险”, 试着使用第二语言。教师应该知道班上学生谁是内向的, 谁是外向的, 并防止只让外向学生发言。

2. 应该提醒外向的学生, 仅仅可以理解的(但结构上或多或少不太准确的)流利讲话是不够的, 不是在所有第二语言场合都适用

的，应该对他们强调准确性。

9.4.3 认知方式

认知方式是指人们组织、分析和回忆新的信息和经验的方式。就认知方式讲，语言学习者可分为两种：**场依存**和**场独立**。测量场依存型时，让学习者观看一个复杂的图案，并找出隐藏在图案内部的几个简单几何图形。目的是看他们能否把看到的東西分解成若干部分，并能使这些部分脱离整体。这种测验也适用于语言学习者，因为他们也是要从上下文中把语言项目分离出来才能理解它们。例如，在读一页材料时，他们必须能够识别词、短语和句子，并能理解这些部分如何结合起来构成一个整体。

场依存型的学习者有以下特点：他们对教师提供的语言信息不加分析，不加思考，教师如何教授，他们就如何接受。他们特别依赖别人对他们的看法，在很大程度上要靠别人的表扬。他们给别人的印象是直爽，对别人感兴趣，用第二语言与别人交往的技能可能会发展较好。

场独立型的语言学习者并不把所教的语言信息看作理所当然的正确的。他们总是要加以分析和思考，然后判断是否正确。他们对自己本身有很强的意识，往往对别人不太敏感，不喜欢接近别人。所以他们对发展交际技能可能不感兴趣。

韩森和斯坦菲尔德（1981）做了实验，其假设是：

场依存型学习者在用第二语言进行交际时水平更高些。

场独立型学习者的第二语言的结构知识更多一些。

他们的被试者是293名在美国大学学习西班牙语的初学者。实验结果完全出乎预料之外，场独立型学习者不论在结构知识方面，还是在交际运用方面，都比场依存型的学习者成绩好。主要测试语言知识的其他实验也表明，场独立型的学习者学习成绩更好一些。

只有韩森和斯坦菲尔德的实验，既测了语言知识又测了交际能

力，并与场依存型相比较。虽然他们发现场独立型学习者总的语言水平更高一些，但是交际能力与场独立型的相关关系，低于传统语言水平测试与场独立型的相关关系。所以，这里遇到的情况可能与语言学能测验的情况相似：就是说，所得的结论是关于总的语言水平的（语言知识和运用这种知识的能力），而实际上测试工具只测量了语言水平的一部分（即语言知识）。

场独立型的学习者是要对语言输入加以思考的。在正式教授环境中，他们会对教给他们的语言项目进行有意识的思索和分析，并考虑如何将这些项目纳入整个语言系统。在自然习得环境中，他们也会积极加工语言输入，建立关于语言功能的假设。所以无论在哪种情况下，他们对语言结构的理解，比不加思考地接受语言输入的人，要深刻得多，广泛得多。所以他们在结构测验中得分较高。虽然在一次实验中场独立型与交际能力也显示了低的、然而却是显著的相关关系，但是还不足以证明场独立型一般都会导致更高的总体语言水平。

9.4.4 神会和抑制

神会指的是愿意并能够对别人心领神会。据信 (Guiora, 1972)，神会与第二语言学习有关系，因为学习另一种语言意味着自己同时成为另一个人。据吉奥拉说，要同时变成另一个自身，迈出的最大的一步就是学会象本族人一样去发第二语言中的音。他说，这一步很重要，因为对于我们这些青年人和成年人来说，用母语如何讲话、如何发音，是我们自身的重要特征。比如在中国，讲话时带湖南口音还是北京口音，是湖南人还是北京人的重要标志。学习者按照第二语言的发音习惯去讲这种语言时，要暂时失去母语中的自我，成为另一个自我——这就是说他们在与别人的思想感情产生共鸣。

学习者能否对别人心领神会，取决于他们的自我界限是否灵

活。有些人比较灵活，有些人受到抑制。灵活的学习者能够比较容易地容纳两个自我：一个是母语的，一个是第二语言的。

已经有人做过几种实验，试图测量神会能力与第二语言发音的关系。实验结果说法不一。但是吉奥拉（1972）发现，如果让被试者喝一点酒，把抑制作用减弱，自我界限会变得灵活些，在发音测试中成绩会好些。

神会与第二语言成绩之间有没有关系，目前还没有发现。生来直爽、灵活、适应性强、对别人敏感又感兴趣的学习者，比性格死板、不灵活的学习者，很可能在使用第二语言时（成为第二语言的自我）更自在一些。

9.4.5 学习策略

按鲁宾的定义，学习策略是“语言学习者用以获取知识的技术或手段。”（1975：43）她说，有意识地采用学习策略的学习者能够帮助自己习得第二语言。按照鲁宾1975年的研究，“优秀语言学习者”尽可能地做以下事情：

1. 对课堂上的集体活力（气氛）作出反应，以便不产生抑制感或焦虑感。
2. 利用一切机会使用第二语言。
3. 抓住机会练习听别人对自己或对别人讲的话，并作出反应——注意意义而不是形式。
4. 除了直接接触第二语言本族人外，还正式研究语言形式。
5. 他们是成人或者青年，不是儿童，还处于学习语法的初期。
6. 有足够的分析技能去认识第二语言特征，并加以分类和储存，并用这些特征来监测语言输出。
7. 有充足的理由学习第二语言。
8. 愿意在使用语言中冒险，出点洋相也不在乎。
9. 能适应不同的学习环境。

鲁宾(1981), 欧麦利(1985)和其他人在后来的研究中区别了两类学习策略。

	鲁宾(1981)	欧麦利(1985)
第一类	允许学习发生的行为	认知策略
	如: 重复、翻译、记笔记等	
第二类	有利于学习的行为	无认知策略
	如: ①了解自己学习的最佳环境, 并保证这种环境存在。 ②纠正自己的话, 使之更准确、得体。 ③如果成功地完成某项学习任务, 给自己以鼓励。	

欧麦利还说, 使用的学习策略随着时间的不同而变化。初学者使用比较简单的认知策略, 中级学习者使用比较复杂的无认知策略。

如果真的象所说的那样, 使用这些学习策略能够帮助学习者发展自己的第二语言能力, 那么人们自然会问, 这些学习策略能向学习者教授吗? 欧麦利(1985b)向75名把英语做为第二语言学习的高中生教授一些学习策略。然后他给他们进行了听力考试和口语考试, 看看学过学习策略的学生是否比没有学过学习策略的学生成绩好些。结果发现, 听力考试过难, 无法使用任何学习策略。不过, 在口语考试中, 学习过学习策略的学生确实比没有学过的学生成绩好一些。

这项实验似乎表明, 学习策略是可以教授的。不过需要记住, 学生不熟悉的学习策略, 需要很长时间才能成为他们学习第二语言的方式的组成部分。例如, 欧麦利(1987)发现, 亚洲学习者与西班牙学习者相比, 前者更难放弃死记硬背的学习方法。

关于学习策略的研究对语言教学的启示:

1. 来自不同文化的学习者对“优秀语言学习者”的概念会有不同的看法。所以，教师应该了解不同学习者已经采用的不同学习策略，并加以利用。例如，由于教育传统不同，中国学习者很愿意使用记忆方法，而且也善于记忆。教师就应该考虑如何利用这一方法。就以词汇为例。只要教师保证，所学词汇是有用的，能够放在合适的语境之中，而且能经常出现，那么中国学生善于记忆的优势会使他们的词汇发展相当迅速。

2. 教师应该让学习者知道，哪些学习策略适合他们的学习环境，而且与他们的学习传统不十分矛盾。教师应该使课堂气氛有利于使用好的学习策略。例如，如果我们考虑在中国的情况下上一节提到的“优秀学习者”的特征，那么：

9.4.5节中第1、2、8条都关系到创造健康的课堂气氛，使学习者敢于“冒险”，利用一切机会使用第二语言。这就是说，学习者之间、学习者与教师之间的关系要融洽；要想学好语言，这在任何文化环境中都是必要的。

第3、4条说，一个优秀的学习者有时候集中研究语言的意义，有时又集中研究表达意义的语法形式。这就是说，课堂教学中有时要强调研究结构，有时则要强化结构表达的意义。这样的课堂教学并不是哪种文化环境所特有的。

9.4.6 性格因素：结论

由于性格因素对第二语言习得的影响的研究，大都遇到这个问题：这些因素的测量非常粗糙，仅按照某一特征就把学习者分成几组。如把他们分成内向型和外向型，场依存型和场独立型，等等。结果，许多实验的数据不能说明任何问题，所得出的结论只能表示某些趋势，而不是绝对不变的。

最后的办法是：教师有责任了解每个学习者的特点。在此基础上，教师则能够创造一种课堂气氛和教学输入，使各种性格的学习

者都能从中尽量受益。

小结

本章中我们讨论了以下问题：

1. 在什么年龄开始学习第二语言常常影响到最后达到的语言水平。青年和成人时期才开始学习的话，很难达到本族人的语言水平，在发音方面尤其如此。

2. 到目前尚未彻底研究清楚有没有一种独立于一般智力的、被称为语言学能的大脑能力，它能不能准确地预测谁将来是优秀的学习者。目前使用的语言学能测验不甚令人满意，因为学能测验本身及其所参照的语言测试，都只测语言知识，不测使用这种知识的能力。它们只测认知和学术语言能力，而这种能力用一般智力测验也可以测出。

3. 学习动力对学习第二语言的成败至关重要。决定学习者学习动力的因素有：

- 他们学的主题是否与其学习目的有直接关系
- 成功地完成学业后对他们有没有益处
- 他们是否感到自己的第二语言水平确实在提高

4. 还没有充分证据说明，哪一种性格的人一定是优秀语言学习者。概括地讲，如果教学目的是培养在俗体一端能够流利地运用语言的人，那么，外向的、灵活的、不受抑制的、能够神会的学习者也许学习较成功。如果教学目的是培养能够准确运用语言的人，而不需要他们说得如何流利，那么，比较细心的、内向的、场独立型的学习者可能学得更好一些。不过应该强调指出，性格与第二语言学习成绩的关系目前了解甚少，尚不能依此为根据而作出严重影响他人一生的重要决定。

5. 据说，采用某些学习策略比不用这些策略学习效果好。

如果真是这样，这些策略应该教给学习者。有证据表明，这种学习策略是可以教授的，而且确实能够提高学习成绩。但是，来自不同文化背景的人对哪些是容易使用的策略有不同的看法。所以，教师不可期望对一切学习者教授相同的学习策略。教师应该很敏感，要发现何种文化背景的人喜欢哪种学习策略，并想办法利用它们改进学习者的学习方法。

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第十章 第二语言习得研究： 应该注意的问题

本章总结一下关于第二语言习得的研究：是什么因素使第二语言学习和母语习得如此不同。在此基础上，探讨教师如何讲究实际地充分利用自己所处的教学环境。

10.1 母语习得与第二语言学习

前面讲到，一切正常人到5-6岁时，其语法能力基本上达到本族人的水平，而且无需任何正式教授。而第二语言学习者，经过几百个小时的正式教授，仍然很难达到同样的水平。下面讨论造成这种区别的几种原因。

10.1.1 输入不同，输出机会不同

母语习得者	第二语言学习者
从一开始儿童就用语言做事情。	学习者在课堂上用语言做不真实的事情。
对儿童的语言输入涉及到真正的交际，并要求儿童作出反应。	对学习者的语言输入都是不真实的问题，他们作出不真实的回答。
语言输入和输出讲的是与当时当地有关的事情。	语言输入和输出（一般）以教科书为基础。

续 表

语言的集中点显然在于如何得体地使用语言。	语言的集中点明显地在于语言的结构规则。
在交往中，儿童与父母或其他儿童都是平等的。	教师控制课堂交际。学生使用语言的机会很少。

习得母语的儿童从小就受益于使用母语进行真正的交际。谈的都是自己当时的愿望、需要和兴趣，不太可能把第二语言完全变成习得母语那样的学习环境，也让学习者用语言去做对自己有意义的事情。不过，教师可能发现，什么样的教材会使学习者感兴趣，什么样的教材直接关系到他们的需要，至少使用一部分这样的材料做为课堂输入。此外，教师还可以做到，让学习者进行的语言活动有足够的种类变化，保证课堂上有些时间是学习者在讲话，而不是教师在讲话。教师与学习者在教室需要进行的真正交际，应该运用第二语言去进行。这包括课堂管理和组织（如讲课，解释和评论），以及学生之间和师生之间的正常社会交往（打招呼，谈论日常生活，谈天气，节假日等）。

10.1.2 学习环境不同

显然，在家里与母亲在一起的儿童和在教室里的第二语言学习者处于很不相同的学习环境。下面大致列出其主要区别：

母语习得者	第二语言学习者
几乎总是处于母语环境。	很少处于第二语言环境。
处于支持性的、照顾周到的、一对一的学习环境。	很少处于一对一的学习环境。
在鼓励性的、有趣味的环境中交往，没有压力，也没有竞争。	经常处于竞争性很强的，以考试为目的的、有等极标志的、有压力的学习环境。
不用担心母语运用的好坏。	非常担心第二语言运用的好坏。

在不同的学习环境中，有许多事实是无法改变的。习得母语和学习第二语言在“教师-学生”的比例上有很大不同，这是无法改变的事实。的确，第二语言学习者永远也不会象习得母语的儿童那样得到那么多的个人教授。另一事实是，学好第二语言对学习者将来的生活有重大影响，所以他们往往感到有很大的压力，需要取得明显的进步，而习得母语的儿童从来没有这种压力。不过，教师可以尽量创造一种鼓励性的、支持性的、不令人害怕的课堂气氛。他们至少在某些时候鼓励学生不用去担心考试成绩；学习不是互相竞争而是合作；即使没有把握，也可以试着使用语言，因为他们知道犯几个错误不会被嘲笑或批评。这样，有信心的学生和害羞的学生就都敢于对语言输入做出反应，产生自己的语言输出。教师可以利用一切现有的本族语者的输入材料，包括本族语教师、本族人制作的听力或录相材料、或者文字材料，以弥补第二语言环境之不足。课堂永远也不可能达到理想的程度，但是对大多数学习者来说，这是实际存在的最好条件了。要靠教师和学习者去充分利用它。

10.1.3 是正式学习还是自然习得语言结构?

儿童生来就具有语言普遍性的知识，他们通过日常生活中的语言运用，便可创造性地构建母语的结构，那么，年纪较大的第二语言学习者也能这样做吗？通过建立和验证假设，他们也能利用课堂上的语言输入研究出第二语言的结构规则吗？如果输入中的结构不是按照难易程度排列的，是否也可以研究出其规则呢？是不是只有在第二语言环境的学习者才能在实际生活交往中检验假设，才有可能这样做呢？明确教授第二语言形式，并让学生机械地练习使用这些形式，这种作法是好还是不好？这种作法应该是整个课程的主要部分，还是次要部分？其比重是否应该随着学生水平的提高而变化？还是到某个阶段应该停止？

如何回答这些问题主要取决于两个因素。第一，是否坚信这种

观点：在课堂上形成的关于第二语言结构的假设，要有机会检验才有利于学生的过渡语的发展。正式学习的语言能否通过使用变成习得了的语言？第二，要看对学生的需要如何估计。他们要在准确性和流利性方面达到何种水平？他们将来需要使用第二语言的语境范围有多大？他们将来主要使用语言的拘泥体还是俗体？所以，正式学习在总课时中所占的比例取决于学生毕业之后用该语言要做什么事情。

看来，对于大多数脱离第二语言环境的成年和青年学习者，需要明确地教授语言的结构规则。随着学生水平的提高，这种结构的学教也就不太必要了。通过早期的集中教授和控制练习，到这时结构规则已能实际运用，即完全习得了。

10.1.4 学习者的年龄差异

我们在第九章讲到，学习者开始学习第二语言的年龄影响到最后达到的水平和学习方法。

母语和第二语言 儿童学习者	第二语言青年和 成人学习者
无意识地学习或习得语言。所感兴趣的是看自己运用的语言是否能完成要它完成的事。	意识到正式学习的过程，希望别人讲解如何使用语言规则。
不作正式的语法规则训练。强调流利性。	操练语法规则，以便学会。强调准确性。
使用语言时不感觉到难为情。很可能达到本族语者的准确水平和流利水平。	对话误、发音和出洋相感到难为情。很难达到本族语者的准确水平和流利水平。

一般说来,把本族语者语言能力作为成人或青年人语言课程的最终目标是不现实的。这种目标通常是达不到的。

任何第二语言教学大纲,在计划多少课时进行语法规则正式教授、多少课时给学生机会运用所学知识时,都要把学习者的年龄因素考虑进去。大多数第二语言学习者是青年人或成人。这种年龄较大的学习者似乎对语言结构有更强的意识。一开始,他们愿意花些时间明确地学习结构规则,并做些正式的练习,然后再实际运用这种语言。如果从小学开始第二语言学习,一开始应该着重训练说话流利和发音正确,一方面因为这个年龄的孩子使用语言时仍然比较自然,另一方面因为他们的认知能力还不够成熟,还不能有效地分析第二语言的结构规则。

10.2 学习者的个人差异

10.2.1 集体活力和课堂气氛

课堂上能出现健康的集体活力,对教师和学习者都有好处:

1. 在很大程度上它决定着强调语言运用的那部分教学的成败。因为这意味着,在组织和实施较自由的、以学生为中心的教学中,学生比较合作。他们会珍惜练习所学知识的机会。

2. 它能保证内向的学生和外向的学生都有足够信心充分参与课堂活动。

3. 它能使学生比较容易地对第二语言的新自我心领神会,并感到这种新自我有吸引力。

4. 它意味着,场独立型学习者感到能够有机会怀疑和分析所得到的语言输入。教师有信心让学生提出问题,弄清不太明确或前后不一致的语言现象。他可以承认自己也不知道或者自己讲错了,表示愿意与学生相互学习。

10.2.2 语言学能

据说，每个人在母语中都有两种语言能力：认知和学术语言能力和与别人交际的基本技能。如果真是这样，那么任何第二语言训练大纲都要考虑，其学习者是需要培训认知和学术语言能力，还是需要培训与别人交际的基本技能，还是两种能力都需要。

目前使用的学能测验主要预示认知和学术语言能力，而不能预示交际技能。所以，如果学习者的主要目的是要能够用第二语言进行自然的、流利的口语交际，那么这种学能测验不能准确地预示其最终达到的语言水平。以这种测验为依据来决定谁可以参加第二语言学习，是不可靠的。因为任何学习者最后都应该不仅能够理解这种语言，而且能够产生这种语言。

10.2.3 动力和态度

世界上这种情况是极为普遍的：即不为任何明确目的而教授英语（或任何其他外语）（TENOR）。在这种情况下，学习者的动力来自于语言训练课程本身的优势。这种课程本身要非常有趣，听课是一种享受，才能使学习者有一种积极的态度，使他继续学下去，尽管学习之后不一定给他带来什么实惠。

学习者的动力可能受到多种态度的影响。学习者本人、父母、同龄人等对以下问题所持的态度：第二语言，第二语言的本族人，估计学习这种语言有多少困难或使学习者产生多大的焦虑感，学习者学习的成败等，据说都会影响到学习者的动力。

有些学习者并没有明确的工具性动力或结合性动力；对他们来说，鼓励他们采取积极态度尤其重要。一个没有明确教学目的的第二语言训练班，要靠本身的优势鼓励学习者采取积极态度，就必须保证至少有一部分语言输入能满足学习者的实际兴趣，因为教学大纲不能依据学习者的需要来设计。要做到这一点，就得花些时间培

养比较健康的集体活力，使学习者愿意为确定的教授主题和讨论题目，做出自己诚挚的贡献。

10.2.4 学习者的个人差异：结论

要想认真对待学习者之间的个人差异，那么，在课程的计划阶段，就要首先回答几个问题，然后再决定教学大纲和教材。

学习者是谁？ 中学生，非英语专业的大学生，工程师，饭店工作人员，即将去第二语言环境生活的人？

学习者的特点？ 年龄，文化程度，从前是否学习过这种语言？

他们要学习什么？ 准确掌握语言结构？掌握到什么程度？流利的讲话能力？在何种场合？正确程度如何？

如何提供他们所需要的语言内容？ 在正式教学上花多少时间以强调正确性，花多少时间组织使用语言的活动以强调流利性？对语误应持何种态度？最合适的教学方法是什么？有什么教材和设备？

当然，实际上在大部分第二语言教学环境中，教师并没有机会参与教学大纲的制定。教师与学习者在课堂上见面之前，以上问题早已决定。所以，实际上教师只能接受学习者和现有的教材，设法使教学能帮助学生通过规定的测验。即使有这些限制，教师如果了解其学习者，并通过对他们的了解，尽量使课堂教学妙趣横生，总比不这样做占一定的**优势**。这一点不仅在课堂气氛上能反映出来，而且在考试成绩上也会反映出来。

第十一章 如何测验第二语言 知识和运用

第九章讲到，语言学能测试只测验语言形式的知识，还提到，许多第二语言的成绩测试和水平测试也是这种情况。前几章都很清楚地说明，语言是人类用于互相交际的最重要工具之一，用于表达和理解意义及意图。研究证据进一步表明，任何语言的声音、字母、词、句子，在语境中是重要的意义载体，但脱离语境之后就没有意义了。既然如此，给“懂一种语言”下定义的话，就必须既要懂得这种语言的形式，又要懂得如何使用这些形式去表达和理解意义。那种声称能够测出学习者语言水平的测验只是测了其识别正确的语法形式，实际上测到的是学习者的部分语言知识。本章中，我们首先简要地讨论语言测试的原则。然后讨论测试语法、词汇和语言技能的方法，这些方法要求学习者既能识别又能运用第二语言。

11.1 两种主要的语言测试

两种最常用的语言测试是**成绩测验**和**水平测验**。成绩测验以某种语言教学大纲或大纲的一部分，或学习者学过的教科书中的某几章为基础。这种测验测量学习者对所授课程学习得如何。在中国，高中毕业生参加的英语高考和大学英语本科学生的期中测验，都属于成绩测验，前者规模很大，后者规模很小。前者以中学英语教学大纲为基础，后者以某种教科书的几章为基础。

水平测验不以任何教学大纲或教科书为基础。这种测验的目的

是检查学习者在某个时期内的综合语言水平。常用这种测验来判断某学习者的语言能力是否足以完成某项任务，或做某项具体工作。中国的“英语水平测试”，美国的“托福”，英国的“国际英语测试中心”的测验，都属于水平测验。这三种测验虽然不同，但其目的都是用来判断学习者是否有一定的英语水平赴英语国家顺利地学习。

11.2 语言测试原则

11.2.1 效度

一切测验都应有效，效度就是看一种测验要测量什么和测量得是否准确。如果我们知道某套试题是有效的，那么我们就能确实了解通过或没有通过这项测验的人水平如何。效度有两个最主要的方面：**内容效度**和**编制效度**。

说一套试题有内容效度，就是说它包含了旨在测量的语言结构和技能的适量的样品。一次有效的期中测验必须包括前半学期所教授的语言结构和技能的恰当比例。一次有效的综合水平测验则要包含对整个语言结构的有代表性的抽样，以及学习者的四种语言技能。内容效度在语言测试中十分重要，因为有些语言事实比其他语言事实容易测验，所以往往测得很多。一个明显的例子是，直到最近几年，即使在水平测验中，对于口语、写作和听力等技能都很少测验。为了清楚地知道一种测验是否有内容效度，设计者应该具体说明其测验旨在测量的语言范围。实际上，很少有设计者这样做。

说一种测验有编制效度，是说它只测量其旨在测量的内容，不测其他内容。例如，要测验学习者的口语水平，就用各种办法让学习者运用口头语言，那么这项口语水平测验就具有编制有效性。相反，如果一种测验只包含测第二语言结构的多项选择题和阅读理解

题，那么它作为口语水平测验没有编制效度。要使一项测验有最高的编制效度，就应该使它尽可能**直接地**测量旨在测量的内容。所谓**直接测量**，就是说要想测量学习者的四种语言技能，就真正让他们在不同语境中去读、写、说或听第二语言。语言测验就要保证测的是所学语言，而不是测什么创造性思维、综合智力或经验的丰富与否。所以，在一次写作测验中，下列项目是不合适的：

1. Beginning with the sentences that follow write a composition of at least 250 words. "Why did you bring that with you?" said Peter. "It'll only slow you down".
2. Write a report, not a story on: How you would mend a broken window.

第1题不仅测验学习者的第二语言水平，而且测验想象力和创造性。第2题是不公平的，因为曾经修过窗户的人比没有修过窗户的人回答起来容易多了。所以这种试题不仅仅是第二语言测验。

11.2.2 信度

信度有两个方面：一是**试题信度**，一是**阅卷人信度**。试题信度是指一种测验的得分是否前后一致。例如，如果一种测验有两套平行试卷，同一个人连续两天做这两套试卷，而得分几乎相同，这种测验就具有试题信度。阅卷人信度是指评阅同一试卷的不同评阅人的意见非常相近。

可以采取几种直截了当的办法来保证试题信度。第一，使测验尽可能多地包括学习者语言活动的不同采样。这就是说，问题数量尽可能多些，并且是多种多样的，以便让学习者有机会表现出在各种第二语言环境中所能做的事情。语言技能测验应该包括好几种不同的项目。例如，一种听力测验可以要求学习者既能应付会话，又能应付独白，还能应付有种种口音的讲话者，并要求他们对听到的话语作出各种反应。比如，让他们听一段电话对话；借助地图听有

关行走的指示语；听一段讲课，同时做听课笔记；听一段讨论来识别一组图画中的某一幅。

第二，显然不应期望学习者去做自己很生疏的测试项目；一切指示语都应清清楚楚，十分具体，保证每个学习者都做同样的事情。如果题类生疏或指示语含糊不清，所得分数则会人为地偏低，试题信度也会随之下降。

第三，一切问题和任务的规定都要尽量具体，使学习者对每个项目的理解都是一致的，回答方式也是一致的，这样评出分数来才有可比性。试看下面四个写作考试题：

1. Discuss tourism

2. Discuss tourism in China

3. Discuss how to promote tourism in China

4. Discuss how the following might help promote tourism in China:

Building more low-priced hotels

Improving transport

Better training for those working in the tourism industry

只有第4题最有可能保证学习者写的内容比较一致。也就是说，这样他们的写作能力才能较为可靠地加以比较。

显然，阅卷人信度对任何一种测验都很重要。正因为如此，近年来人们设计了无需评卷人做出判断的试题。在语言测试中，这种项目一般为**多项选择题**。由于这种题目可以由人或机器**客观地**评分，所以变得相当盛行。不过，它们所测的语言能力种类有限，所以其效度值得怀疑。多项选择式的题目很难或者不可能有效地测量学习者运用语言的能力。所以，随着人们对语言运用的测验越来越有兴趣，**主观**评分的题目比例也有所增加。主观评分自然会给阅卷人信度造成困难。这些困难和减少困难的办法将在11.6.2和11.7.3节加以讨论。

11.2.3 实用性

教师应首先考虑所处的第二语言具体环境，然后再开始设计有效的、可靠的语言测验。设计者在酝酿一种新的测验之前，要考虑四个实际问题。第一，设计这种新测验是否容易、低廉？设计试题项目对教师来讲是很花时间的，印刷试卷和制作录音也很昂贵。第二，新的测验实施起来是否经济？由于测验变了，教师可能需要培训才能实施。新的测验可能需要的教室和教师数目与原来有所不同，完成试卷的时间长短也许不同。第三，设计者还要考虑试题评分是否容易、经济。教师可能需要培训新的评阅技术，做这种评阅工作可能需要增加工资。也可能需要指定某人为主考官，让他培训评阅人，评阅人有不同意见时由他裁决。第四，如果测试结果难以解释，这种新的测试不会有多大用途。所以有必要考虑，这种测验能否清楚地说明，通过和不能通过这种测验的人，能用第二语言做什么或不能做什么。语言测试中这些实际问题并不是某种测验所特有的。效度和信度问题也不是某种测验所固有的。从下表可以看到，常用的多项选择测验和技能直接测验，并不是没有问题的：

	(客观评分法)	(主观评分法)
容易设计	×	✓
容易实施	✓	×
容易评分	✓	×
容易理解	×	✓
效度高	×	✓
信度高	✓	×

人们通常认为，多项选择测验是可靠的，但不一定是有效的，而且要设计好是十分困难的，其结果也不容易解释。语言技能的直接测验（又称**交际测验**）一般被认为是有效的，但可能信度不高。

这种测验设计容易，解释容易，但实施和评分都很费时间。

如果设计测试的这三条原则互相矛盾，教师应该给学习者使用哪类测验呢？一方面，要使测验有效，不仅要测语言结构知识，而且要测语言运用能力。另一方面，为了有较高的效度，至少口语测验和写作测验就得采用主观评分法，结果，降低了阅卷人信度。尽管看上去十分矛盾（客观测验可靠，但效度低；主观测验有效，但不够可靠），我们仍然坚信测试结构与测试技能同样重要。这样做之所以比较理想还有另一个非常重要的原因。

世界上大部分学习第二语言的人都要通过某种考试。因此语言测试强烈地影响着课堂教学。测试对课堂教学和学习的影响叫**测试回冲**。如果只测验语法和词汇，教师和学习者就集中精力于语法和词汇。反过来，如果测验要求学习者表现出运用语言的能力，就得拿出一部分课堂时间来练习语言运用。如果我们认为第二语言学习者应该能够运用语言，那么保证师生严肃对待技能教学的最有效的办法，就是在语言测验中增加技能测验项目。

下几节将讨论如何客观地测验语法、词汇、阅读和听力，而又不用多项选择的题型；我们要讨论让学习者做哪些事情以说明他们可以运用第二语言。然后讨论测验写作和口语的几种方法，以及教师如何减少这种测验的评分上的主观性。

11.3 测验语言结构

语言的结构可以用多项选择题来测。但是多项选择题只能测验学习者识别正确语法形式的能力，不能测验运用这些形式的能力。这里介绍几种可以客观评分的、能测语言运用的语法项目。

11.3.1 完成句子/完形测验变体

这类问题要求学习者在语段中的空格处填上正确的语法结构。

例如:

I go to classes every day, but I _____ to the library for weeks.

正确回答应为haven't been。实际上,还有许多别的回答在语法上和语义上也都是正确的:

may not go won't go shan't go can't go am not going
haven't gone haven't been able to go

还有其他可能性。如果语境提供得更加详细,可能的回答会大大减少:

I go to classes every day, but I _____ to the library since I returned from the summer vacation two months ago.

上面提供的两行回答中,第一行的回答不再可以接受。但是仍然有三种可能的回答,不过这三种都是可以预示的,告诉评卷人三种均可接受即可。

要想把可能性回答限制得更死,就要提供更多的语境信息:

It (1) often helpful (2) try answering the sorts of questions (3) you may (4) asked to do (5) an exam.
(6) is not, however, enough just (7) look at (8) past paper (9) answer the questions in (10) head. This will (11) you a clear idea what you (12) capable of.

这是一种完形测验变体。每个项目只有一种回答是语法上和语义上都正确的,只有第8项是两个可能(a/the)。

还可以把这类题目设计得更难一些。让学习者自己决定文章中什么地方省略了词,而且填上被省略的词。例如:

It often helpful to try an-	is
swering the sorts questions	of
that you may be asked do	to
in an exam. It is not	

enough just look at to
 past paper and answer the a/the
 questions in head. This will your
 not give you a clear idea
 of you are capable of... what

在此类测验中，设计者一般每行只去掉一个词，所以文章通常要长一些。

这种完形测验变体可用来测验广泛的和局部的语法能力。例如，可用它测验冠词和介词用法，也可以测验更大范围的语法项目。

11.3.2 释义和转换项目

这两种类型的题目可以覆盖很大范围的语法结构。为了限制可能的回答，需要提供释义的第一部分。例如：

- 1) It was difficult to see in the thick fog.
 Seeing _____.
- 2) George is a lot taller than Paul.
 Paul is not _____.
- 3) Susan is very good at table tennis.
 Susan plays _____.
- 4) Couldn't you find a cheaper bicycle?
 Is this _____?
- 5) Elizabeth started teaching fifteen years ago.
 Elizabeth has _____.
- 6) My wife knitted this jumper.
 This jumper _____.

这两种类型问题的优点是，学习者必须表明他们（不仅能识别，而且）能创造语法正确的结构。为了保证评分的客观性，需要

清楚地知道每个问题在测验什么，还要给评卷人提供正确答案。凡是对所测语法结构的回答是正确的，都应给分；与所测语法项目无关的语法错误，不应扣分。阅卷之前，还应决定如何对待拼写错误。

把多项选择题与以上两类题目结合起来，比只包括多项选择识别项目的语法测验，会更全面地反映出学习者的实际水平。

11.4 测验词汇

第二章曾提到，在教授和测验词汇之前，应该首先决定哪些词汇是学习者能够积极地运用的，而哪些词汇只需被动地理解。测验词汇同样也常常只用多项选择式的识别性问题。下面讨论几种其他方法。

11.4.1 大规模匹配项目

这类题目给应试者许多词汇项目和相同数目的句子，每句中有一个词被去掉了，让他们选择合适的词填入空格。例如：

unreliable, prefer, bachelor, take, moustache, leisure,
bulge, intelligent, sincere, complexion, miss, absorb, etc.

1. Is his skin dark? No, he has a fair_____.

2. She's not stupid, she's quite_____.

等等。这类项目有三个问题。第一，语境不够完整，可能出现多于一项的回答而在语义上也讲得通。第二，如果提供的词数与句子数目相同，每填充一题，测验就变得容易一些。第三，如果学习者知道省略部分的词类，则可不用考虑语法上不合适的选择。

如何解决这些问题，请看下面一例：

Instructions:

From the list of words given choose the one which is most

suitable for each gap. Write the letter of the correct word ONLY in each gap on your answer sheet. Use each word once only.

- A. usefully B. respectfully C. carelessly D. correctly
E. rapidly F. furiously G. completely H. sadly

“Be sure to write (1) _____” the teacher shouted
(2) _____. “You only have three more minutes and must get used to working (3) _____.” “Excuse me, ” a student said (4) _____. “I’ve finished.” “No, you have not, you haven’t (5) _____ finished until you’ve written your name and the date at the bottom of the page, ” the teacher replied. Meanwhile another student was (6) _____ finishing his essay on “My Classroom” .

这类测验项目的语境更加完整，去掉的词属于同一词类，提供的选择多于空格。所以，选择合适词汇的任务一直持续到最后。

11.4.2 词汇项目的语段替换

测验词汇知识的另一个办法是，选一段没有用过的阅读材料，以此为基础设计词汇题目。在阅读材料之前，给学习者提供一串词或短语，让他们从阅读材料中找出与词或短语意义完全相同的部分。这类测验题目的一大优点是，阅读材料本身提供了详细的语境，设计者无需象11.4.1节中的那样去创造一个人为的语境。在下例中，正确答案是打底横线的部分：

Instructions:

Next to the words and phrases below write words which they could replace in the text, without changing the meaning.

- 1) apart from _____

- 2) equalled _____
 3) border _____
 4) were enough _____
 5) willing _____

The simplest trade mechanisms suffice (4), and among themselves the Boers generated few problems they could not solve by what amounted to the decisions of tribal elders. No government consequently could offer the Boers anything they wanted except (1) armed help against the natives and this they were not prepared (5) to provide. Since they wanted nothing from the government, the Boers saw no reason to support it by paying taxes or rendering services, and the demands of the government were easily evaded on the frontier (3). The situation led to a brand of individualism rarely matched (2) by other pioneering folk.

这种词汇测验可难可易，全取决于所选文章的难易和需要替换的词汇项目的难易。我们认为，这是测验理解能力的最好方法之一，而不是仅仅测验机械记忆。

11.5 测验阅读和听力

决定如何测验阅读和听力之前，必须首先决定，一个熟练的读者或听者应该能够做些什么。已有几位研究者试图确定阅读所涉及的“分技能”，其中之一是英国联合测试委员会提出的。下面是该委员会提出的意见，略有修改：

1. 通过词汇构成和语境线索，推导出生疏词汇的意义和使用法。
2. 理解句子中的关系。

3. 通过连续手段，特别是语法连结，如所指关系（他，她，这，后者，那里等），理解文章中不同部分之间的关系。

4. 通过提出看法的、扩展看法的、结束看法的各种标记，理解文章中不同部分之间的关系。

5. 理解明确提出的思想和信息。

6. 不论有无明显标记（如定义，举例，概括，分类等），都能理解句子的功能。

7. 理解概念意义（对比，手段，结果等）。

8. 理解文章中未直言的思想和信息。

9. 区分重要的和不重要的信息。能够区分什么是主要思想，什么是证明主要思想的细节（区分整体与部分，事实与观点等）。

10. 能用略读去抓大意，能用查读去寻找具体信息。

11. 会用参考信息（使用索引，目录等）。

测验听力技能的范围应该包括听各种各样的对话和独白，长度不一，内容各异，讲话人的口音也是多种多样的，以便做到以下几点（从易到难）：

1. 区分具体音位，如区分 /l/ 和 /r/。

2. 找出具体信息。

3. 找出大意。

4. 按命令或指示行事。

5. 识别结构的功能。如：用陈述句（Your coat is on the floor.）来完成请求或命令。

不会有许多测验彻底地测量所有的分技能，但设计者应该知道这些分技能是存在的，测验应该包括相当比例的最重要的分技能。以上提供的是一份有用的检查表，设计测验可供参考，以便保证所测技能的范围。

这里我们还是不讨论多项选择题目。虽然多项选择题测验阅读和听力是有用的，但这类题目在两个方面有缺陷。第一，覆盖各种

阅读技能或听力技能的多项选择题目，很难设计得出色。结果，许多此类题目设计低劣，有的不止一个正确答案，有的没有正确答案，有的正确答案用不着阅读或听原材料便可推断出来。第二，学习者的阅读量很大才能回答问题。在阅读理解测验中，有时多项选择的阅读量与阅读材料本身相差无几。

下面介绍几种客观地测验阅读能力和听力的方法。这几种方法都属于信息转换法。

11.5.1 匹配和标记任务

阅读理解和听力测验都可使用这类题目：

Instructions:

Read the text "Haibei Island". As you read, write in the names of the places numbered 1 to 6 on the map below and draw a line between the two places that will be connected by the new road.

Haibei Island: Reading Text

Haibei Island is situated in the Bay of Korea, 50 miles east of Dalian in Liaoning province in North East China. It was until the 1980s a rather backward area, but since being declared a Special Economic Zone in 1987, development has been very rapid.

The island is fortunate in having two major rivers, the Jade and the Pearl. The waters of both have been harnessed to provide hydroelectricity which is at present sufficient to supply the island's entire energy needs. The former flows from north to south entering the sea in the southeast of the island near the city of Jichang, while the latter flows through lightly populated but fertile country to enter the sea on the north coast.

Jichang, the largest city on the island, is connected by rail to two of the other main population centres, and Dingshan. At present Yiling, a smaller town famous for its seafood, can only be reached by ferry. The boat leave twice weekly from Yanzhou for the seven hour journey. A road between the two towns is at present under construction. This will, when completed in 1994, cut the travelling time between the two towns to two hours and fully open Yiling to the outside world.

听力测验中教师的笔记

Haibei Island -off Liaoning coast -NE China—Backward until 1980s-1987 Special Economic Zone —rapid development—2 main rivers Jade+Pearl—provide enough hydro power for all energy needs-Jade enters sea SE near Jichang-largest city —spelt J-i-c-h-a-n-g- Pearl flows into sea N. coast —Transport underdeveloped— Railway Jichang to Yanzhou +Dingshan—Yanzhou—YANZHOU—Dingshan DINGSHAN—Yiling YILING, seafood centre, ferry from Yanzhou—Road completed 1994 Yanzhou to Yiling —cut travelling time.

11.5.2 重排顺序题目

如果文章中的顺序十分重要，用这类题目最为合适。例如叙述体文章，描写过程或烹饪方法的文章，或某种使用说明书。给学习者读一篇这样的材料，再把主要事件或阶段打乱顺序后列出来。让学习者阅读或听这篇材料，要求他们按照读到的或听到的顺序重新排列事件或阶段的先后。例如：

阅读材料

There are two main sources of sugar, sugar cane and sugar beet. Sugar cane stalks are cut when they are about 3 to 4 feet

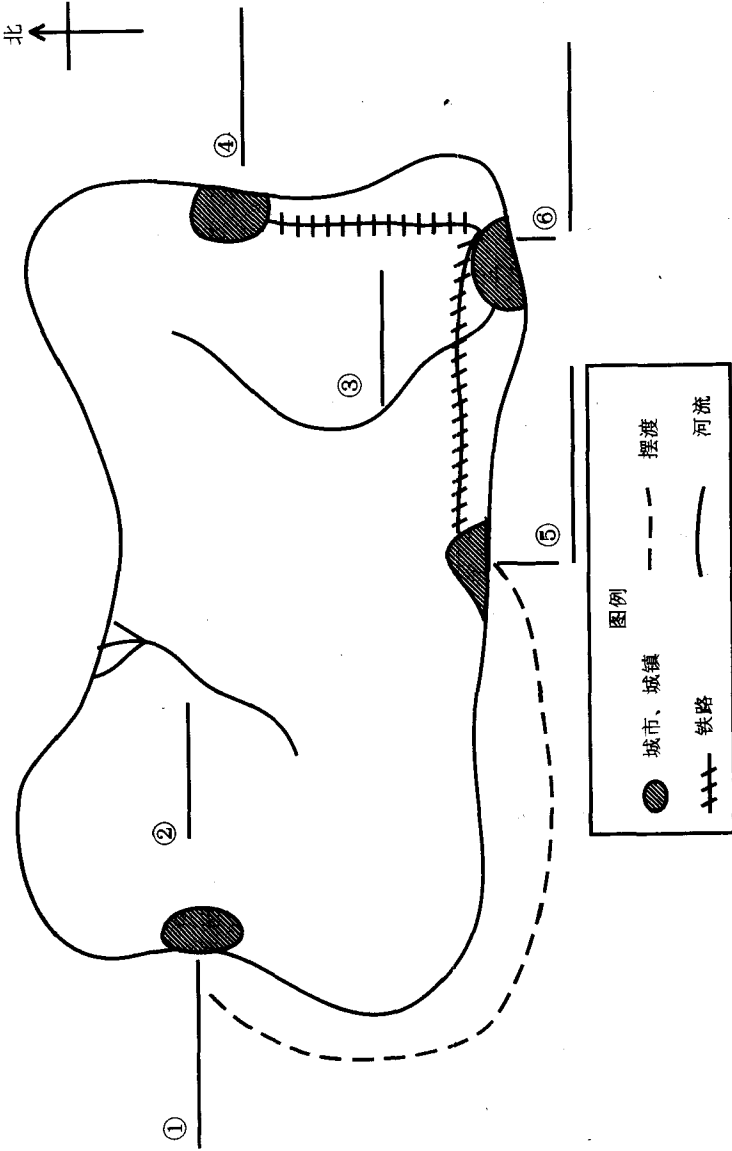


图14 海北岛

long and are washed and crashed between heavy rollers to extract the juice. The liquid that is pressed out of the cane contains impurities and so chemicals such as milk of lime are added. The mixture is heated to boiling point and allowed to settle. The clean juice is separated from the remaining matter and evaporated into a thick syrup which is then evaporated again into a substance called massecuite. This is then rolled in revolving cylinders. The cylinders are perforated and the remaining syrup (molasses) is forced out of the holes leaving the raw sugar inside. This is sent to refineries to be processed for consumption.

Sugar beets are brought from the fields to the factories and washed. They are weighed, cut into slices and put into a series of tall boilers where the beet juice is washed out of the slices with hot water. The juice is purified by adding caustic lime and carbon dioxide to the liquid and then filtering it. The clean juice remaining is evaporated into a syrup and then is prepared for the market in the same way as sugar cane.

听力测验时教师的笔记

2 sources sugar—beet and sugar cane cut when 3 to 4ft high—
washed-crashed —heavy rollers —extract juice —juice impure—
chemicals added —mixture heated to boiling —left to settle —
clean juice separated from rest —evaporated -thick syrup —evapo-
rated massecuite —rolled in cylinders —cylinders holes —rest of
juice out of holes —raw sugar inside—sent to refineries—cleaned
and filtered —pure white sugar —sold. Etc.

Instructions:

Look at the stages of the sugar-making process listed below. Write the letter of each stage in the order in which it happens, next to the numbers under Sugar Cane and Sugar Beet. For example, if you think (a) in the list is the first stage in making sugar from Sugar Cane, write (a) next to number 1 under Sugar Cane. (The answers are given.)

- | | |
|----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| a) chemicals are added | b) the juice is extracted |
| c) the mixture is heated | d) the raw sugar is processed |
| e) it is cut | f) the juice is evaporated |
| g) it is sliced | h) it is crushed |
| i) the juice is washed out | j) it is washed |

Sugar Cane

Sugar Beet

1. e

1. j

2. j

2. g

3. h

3. i

4. b

4. a

5. a

5. f

6. c

6. d

7. f

8. d

11.5.3 完成句子

这类题目可以使用许多不同类型的文章。设计题目时，注意不要使读者或听者的写作任务过重，并要保证只有一个正确答案。请看下例：

Dear Jean,

May 27th

I am sorry that I did not meet you as arranged last night. I hope that you did not wait too long.

The trouble was that I needed the manager's signature on the document that had to be posted urgently to a client in Hongkong. Of course the manager was in a meeting and the meeting went on and on. By the time I had his signature, it was already 5pm, leaving me just half an hour to get to the museum to meet you. I tried to find a taxi but you know what it is like in the rush hour, so I had to catch a bus. The result was I arrived an hour late, at 6:30! The museum was closed and, not surprisingly, there was no sign of you. I went to a pub and tried to ring you but no answer.

Sorry again. Please give a ring soon.

Yours, Mark.

- 1) Mark had arranged to meet Jean at a _____.
- 2) He had to wait for the _____ to sign something.
- 3) He couldn't leave work until the _____ ended.
- 4) He travelled across town by _____.
- 5) He had arranged to meet Jean at _____pm on May _____.

6) Mark's purpose for writing this letter is to _____.

如果是测听力的话, 可以把信变为马克给吉恩打电话, 因未能赴约向她道歉:

Jean, listen. I'm really sorry about last night. We should have arranged to meet later and not at the museum. It's so far from the office. The problem was the boss. I had this letter that had to be posted but that needed his signature. He

of course was in a meeting and couldn't be disturbed. So I had to wait. The meeting went on forever, so by the time I left the office I was already late. I rushed around looking for a taxi, but no luck; it was rush hour of course, so I hopped on a bus. By the time that bus had crawled across town it was 6:30 and I was an hour late. I'm glad you didn't wait.

也可以用完成图表的方式测验阅读或听力。下面便是一例：

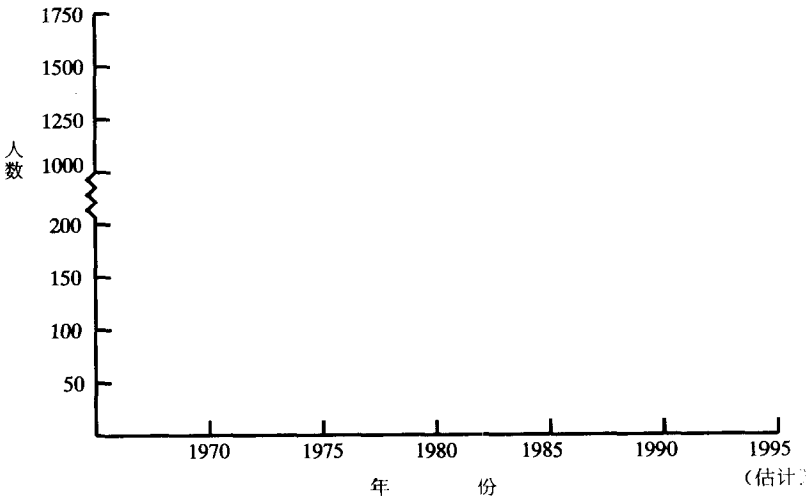
Instructions:

Read/listen to the text and complete the graph /table with appropriate information from the text.

The number of overseas visitors to China has increased enormously over the past two decades. While Overseas Chinese visitors still account for the great majority of tourists, the number coming from Western Europe and North America has also grown steadily, both in absolute numbers and as a proportion of the total. At the end of the 1960s the number of unofficial western visitors was so low that no reliable figures were kept. In 1970, the first year for which figures are available, western tourists to China numbered only 15,000. There was a steady increase in the 1970s with the number doubling by 1975 and reaching 120,000 in 1980. The period of most spectacular growth was yet to come, as numbers increased 10 fold between 1980 and 1985. Tourist numbers declined a little in the second half of the 1980s, due to a number of factors. These included overpricing and less than satisfactory service at some places along the established "tourist trails". As a result the 1985 figure had

fallen by a quarter of a million by 1990. With ever wider areas of China being opened to tourism and with an increased understanding of what it is that western tourists want, it is expected that western tourists will number at least one and a half million by 1995.

来华的西方旅游者人数 (以千计算)



1970年以来来华西方旅游者人数

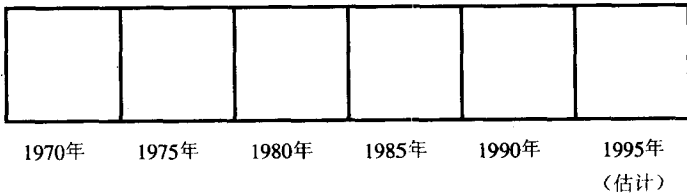


图15

11.5.4 判断正误或无信息项目

正误判断题目使用很广泛。这里只讲如何用于不同类型的文章。正误判断的缺点是，因为只有两种选择，猜测成分可占50%。减少猜测成分的办法之一是再加一项选择：“文章中未提供信息”。这样，其优点多于缺点：

1. 这类题目设计起来又容易又迅速。
2. 几乎各种类型和难易程度的文章都可以使用。
3. 从一短篇文章中也能设计出许多题目。
4. 每一陈述只需一句话，不会大大增加应试者的阅读量。

下面两篇短文取自《中国日报》，可用来测验阅读，或者阅读和听力一起测：

SKYSCRAPER ON FIRE

(News extract)

New York-Fire broke out in one of the twin towers of the World Trade Centre—New York city's tallest building at 110 storeys—at the end of Tuesday evening's rush hour. A spokesman for the city's fire department said an electrical box on the 94th floor of one World Trade Centre erupted in flames. There were no reports of injuries and firefighters evacuated the 93rd, 94th and 95th floors.

Write T (True), F (False) or N (Not told in the text) next to each statement below.

- 1) The World Trade Centre is the highest building in the world.

- 2) The fire occurred about 7 pm.
- 3) The whole building was affected.
- 4) There were many casualties.
- 5) The fire was not started deliberately.

(Advertisement)

MARCO POLA CARPETS SALE FOR CHRISTMAS

with the most favourable price

- Top quality carpets and favourable prices
- Richest assortment of carpets including wool and silk rugs
- Good service
- Certificate of origin provided

Time: Nov. 15 - Dec. 25 1991

Business Hours: 9:00am - 8:00 pm

Address: China World Trade Centre, shopping arcade

Marco Pola Carpet Shop

Beijing Tourism Shopping Centre in

Beijing Exhibition Hall

- 1) Carpets can be delivered to your home.
- 2) The prices are the lowest in Beijing.
- 3) The Christmas sale goes on for more than a month.
- 4) A wide variety of carpets and rugs are available.
- 5) The carpets can only be bought at the China World Trade Centre.

11.5.5 按指示完成任务

这类题目特别适合测验听力，可在语言实验室进行，也可以用
某些测验应试者的按照书面指示行事的能力。具体做法是让应试者听

或读有关指示，并按照指示去做该做的事情。要测验按照指路方向行事的能力，这种题目最合适。下面的例题是所谓的“描写与绘图”技术的一种。应试者读或听到指示，然后按照指示去画。他们的水平高低全看对最后一个问题的回答。如果用此例测验听力，第一阶段先听，做笔记；第二阶段再借助笔记画出图形。见下例：

- 1) Take a pen, a ruler and a blank piece of paper.
- 2) Draw a square with sides 5cm long on the left of the page.
- 3) Write the number “1” under it.
- 4) Draw a second square of the same size to the right of the first one, using the right side of square 1 as the left side of the second square.
- 5) Write number “2” under the second square.
- 6) Find the middle line shared by both squares and extend it 2-3cm upwards.
- 7) Draw 2 lines to connect the top of this line to the top left-hand corner of square 1 and the top right-hand corner of square 2.
- 8) Draw a square with sides 2cm long in the middle of square 1.
- 9) Draw a rectangle 2cm by 3cm inside square 2. Use the bottom line of square 2 as one of the short sides of the rectangle.
- 10) What have you drawn?

11.6 写作测验

11.6.1 应该测验什么？

研究学习者用第二语言写作的好坏，与判断人们如何用母语写作一样，所关心的技能基本相同。主要有三大方面：

1. 机械的写作技能：拼写，标点符号，布局（分段，引语的使用等）
2. 内容：作者是否对要写的东西进行过思考？组织是否合乎逻辑？所用的语言形式和词汇对文章的功能是否合适（叙述，描写，议论，对比等）？
3. 判断：写作风格对写作目的或读者来说是否得体？其正式程度或非正式程度是否判断得正确？

测验用第二语言写作应该包括什么内容，取决于学习者完成学业之后需要做什么。在中国，第二语言学习者可能需做下列事情：

1. 写私人信件或公函
2. 填写有关个人情况的表格
3. 撰写学术论文
4. 为企业写宣传材料或与旅游有关材料
5. 学术性的、文学的或商业翻译

写作文是测验中最常用的形式，但与实际生活中的写作没有什么直接关系。不过我们承认，这种形式在今后若干年内将仍然会广泛用于第二语言写作测验。

测验上面例举的五种写作形式可设想下列比较现实的情景：

1. 公函：写求职申请书。
写信询问有关学习课程的情况。
写信邀请外宾作学术报告或参加招待会或宴会。
写信感谢别人作的学术报告或参加比赛评判等。
2. 填表：有关个人上学和工作经历的详细情况，以便申请签证。开银行帐户。

预订飞机票。

填写出入机场的卡片。

3. 私人信件: 描写家庭、学校、大学等情况。

有关家庭成员和他们所从事的工作。

询问收信人的活动、学习、家庭、今后打算等。

发出邀请。

建议共同参加的活动。

4. 宣传材料: 向希望学习汉语的外国人介绍自己学校的情况。

描写家乡或本省的旅游胜地。

描写有可能打入国际市场的某些产品。

5. 翻译: 宣传材料和广告。

简短的报刊文章。

不论题目种类如何,正如前文所说的,最好是不让学习者只写一种东西。两篇或多篇短的,不同类型的写作,比一篇较长的写作,更能反映出学习者的水平。而且,要把题目界定得尽量详细,让学习者对写作任务有同样的理解。例如:

写一封正式的信函:

You hope to study abroad and have requested details of available courses from various foreign universities. One of these has replied asking you to write a letter giving details of your education to date. Your reasons for wishing to study overseas and how you intend to support yourself financially. Write them a letter covering the points mentioned.

写一封非正式的信:

Your penfriend is going to visit China for 3 weeks. She wants to meet you and see as many of the main tourist sites in China as possible. She will be arriving in and leaving

from Beijing. She has asked you for advice on where to go and how long to stay. She would like to spend at least one week in your hometown. Write and suggest what she could see and do in the time available and when it would be most convenient for you to meet.

写一篇作文:

Write a story about a girl who tried to set a new record by flying her kite for days continuously. Include answers to the following:

Why she wanted to set the record.

What her friend and family thought of her idea.

Where she chose for her attempt.

Whether she succeeded / Why she failed.

Who helped / hindered her in her attempt.

写一份宣传品:

Write a description introducing one of the local specialities produced in your home-town to people overseas. Make sure that you cover the following points:

What the product is called.

What it is - something to eat / wear/use.

What it is made of .

How much it costs.

What is special about it.

Why foreigners might be interested in buying it.

11.6.2 写作测验的评分

前面讲过, 写作题目要尽量详细, 而且要让学习者多写几篇东西, 这样才能提高测验的信度。不过, 如何才能提高写作测验中的

阅卷人信度呢？

首先应该决定用哪种评分方法。主要有三种方法，各有优点和缺点。

机械准确法只看写作中的形式。阅卷人根据正确的标点、拼写和语法决定给多少分，每有一个错误就扣掉一分。这种评分方法的优点是客观、可靠；缺点是它忽视写作的内容。它不考虑所写的内容别人是否能读懂，是否符合写作题目的要求。所以这种评分方法并不可靠，因为写作的主要目的是要成功地表达意义。此外，用这种方法评分的测验，促使教师和学生认为在文字语言中形式的准确性比表达意义的能力更为重要，因此对课堂写作教学有不良影响。

分析法比较灵活。它要求设计者事先决定在写作中主要考虑的是哪些方面。例如：

	5	4	3	2	1
语法					
词汇					
机械形式					
流利性					
内容					

（注：**机械形式**指拼写和标点；**流利性**指文体是否得当，所写内容是否易懂；**内容**指所写的东西是否切题，是否是题目所要求的。）

这种方法的缺点是太费时间，而且十分主观。减少主观性的办法之一是每篇写作由两个或更多的阅卷人评阅。但由于阅卷太费时间，这样做不太现实。所以这种评分方法一直是主观的，不可靠的。

这种方法的主要优点是，依照哪些特征评分和分配给每种特征的分数，都可以根据学习者的水平或写作题目的需要而定。例如，测验初学者时，教师可以增加语法、词汇和机械形式的分数比重，而测验高年级学生时，流利性的分数比例可以增加一些。

印象评分法是指阅卷人很快地读一遍，然后根据总的印象给一个分数。这种分数的量表一般较小，比如0至5分，然后乘以2或乘以4，使其满分为10分或20分。评分之前，应该告诉阅卷人及格和不及格的界限（如0-2分是不及格，3-5分为及格），并告诉他们每小时必须评阅多少份试卷。每小时评阅的试卷要多一些，使阅卷人没有时间回过头来详细分析试卷。

这种方法的优点是评阅速度快，有可能做到每份试卷有两个人或更多的人评阅。这样一来，有可能比其他两种方法的信度更高一些。其缺点是，多人评阅每份试卷需要很好的组织工作。

不论采用哪种方法，在评阅之前都要把阅卷人召集在一起，研究写作题目，对每一个项目都要考虑以下几点：

1. 题目属于哪种类型？是描写？还是对比？还是叙述？
2. 根据第一项的情况，哪些语法特征和组织结构特征应该出现？文章应该如何组织？
3. 阅卷人将期望读到什么内容？最基本的内容应是什么？
4. 这种类型的写作应该具备哪些文体特征？不应该出现哪些文体特征？

比较理想的是，阅卷人应有机会评阅几份试卷，比较一下其他阅卷人的分数，以便发现每位阅卷人所给的分数高低是否基本一致。

由于阅卷人要做很多准备工作，这对一般的期中测验是不现实的。不过，以上讲到的1-4条，在评阅任何写作试卷之前，教师们都应该加以讨论。

11.7 口语测验

11.7.1 为什么要测验口语？

至少在过去的30年中，世界上许多地区采用的语言教学法（如

直接法，听说法，交际法）都以口头语言而不是文字语言为第二语言的教学基础。但是，从来就很少测验学习者的口语能力。

出现这种情况是有多种原因的。第一，口语测验应该测什么呢？例如，是发音完善、语法正确、但讲话做作的学习者好呢？还是交际流畅、但有很重的口音和许多语法错误的学习者好呢？第二，口语能力和听力怎样分开呢？有些时候，讲话人能够成功地用第二语言交流信息，是因为他与某听话人有共同的兴趣或经历。同一个讲话人，有人觉得他所讲的容易听懂，有人则认为不太容易懂。评分人根据什么给分呢？第三，口头语言瞬间即逝。评阅人一边听一边就要做出决定，完全靠印象评分。当然，可以把学习者的音录下来。但是，再听一遍时，实际讲话时的许多特征（如学习者的紧张神态）就会丢失，评分人也不能再由于这些特征给予谅解。口语测验的实施也很费时间，因为如果采用面试的办法，每个学习者至少需要10-15分钟。另一种办法是在语言实验室进行，这样可以同时测验许多人。但是语言实验室也有其局限性，某些类型的口语活动不宜在实验室进行。这一点下面还要讲到。

测验口语能力如此困难，那么是否还值得测呢？我们认为，大部分语言测验应该包含测验口语能力，因为这种测验会起到好的影响。如果行政管理人员、父母、教师、学生都知道语言测验中有口语考试这一部分，他们就都会同意课堂上应该花些时间做口语活动。如果语言测验中仍然不包含口语考试，人们就不会重视在課堂上培养口语能力。

11.7.2 测验口语的方法

11.7.2.1 朗读

朗读可以测验学习者的发音、语调、重读，设计和实施都比较容易，但也有缺点。第一，朗读是一种专门技能，大部分人在日常

生活中是用不着朗读的。所以，如果只测朗读，不能算口语能力的有效测试。第二，测验中过于强调朗读的话，对课堂教学有不良影响。

如果设计者希望把朗读包括在口试之内，就应该设想在日常生活情景中人们朗读些什么材料。可能出现的日常情景有：朗读一件新设备的说明书，朗读一种烹调方法，或读一封听者也熟悉的人的来信。设计者要事先决定，要求朗读的材料应具备哪些特点才能测验以上几个方面。比如，要有一般疑问句和特殊疑问句，要有最小语音对立，如/p/:/b/，/f/:/v/。

11.7.2.2 会话片断

这类问题适合于在语言实验室进行。目的是测验学习者用得体的第二语言在各种情景中主动讲话或回答别人的话。这种方法的优点是可以同时测验许多人，对他们的话也可以客观地评分，于是可以提高信度。主要缺点是控制太严格，不能测验学习者在自然的、不可预示的实际交际中运用语言的能力。与朗读相同，只用这类题目不能有效地测验学习者的口语能力。下面是这类题目的几种形式：

1. 句型转换：

Learners hear: It is raining heavily. Jim and Susan are waiting at home, impatient to get to work in their garden.

Pattern: They wish it would stop raining.

Learners hear: George has a small black and white TV. All his friends have big colour TVs. He would like a colour TV too.

Learners say:

2. 特定情况下用得体的语言开始一次谈话：

Learners hear: A friend of yours has forgotten where he put his glasses. He cannot see very well without them. What could you say to him?

Learners say: 任何一句得体的句子都可以。例如, 可以说:

Can I help you look for them?

When did you last wear them?

3. 作出得体的回答:

Learners hear: Do you mind if I use your pen for a moment?

Learners say: 任何一句得体的回答。例如:

No, not at all.

No, of course not.

Sorry, I need it myself at the moment.

如果测验表达诸如“致谢”、“道歉”、“赞扬”等普通功能的常用套语的使用能力, 这类题目尤其合适。

4. 对较长的语段作出得体的回答:

Learners hear: You are on your way to the market. A man comes up and speaks to you.

Man: Excuse me, I wonder if you can help me. I'm looking for a post office.

(此处由学习者作出回答)

Man: Thank you. Do you know what time it opens?

(此处由学习者作出回答)

Man: Thanks a lot. Oh, by the way, is there a public telephone near here?...

(此处由学习者作出回答)

这类题目的问题是: 第二个问题根本不考虑学习者回答什么。例

如，如果学习者对第一个问题的回答是“不知道”，下面的对话全部变得荒唐可笑。

以上方法都不能测验真正的口头语言，但是人们还是经常使用。因为它们方便、实用。

11.7.2.3 视觉刺激材料

与听力测验一样，图画、地图、图表都可以用作口语测验的输入。可以在语言实验室同时测验许多人，然后听录音再评分。视觉刺激材料也可用作面试的输入的一部分（见下文）。

11.5.1节中的地图和11.5.4节中的表格也可以用来测验口语。可以让学习者描写岛的某些方面，或总结一下表格上的信息。

11.7.2.4 口语作文

另一种比较灵活的测验口语的方法是给学习者一个题目，让他就题目讲几分钟（一个具体时间）。可以是一个简单描写性题目，如“我的家”，也可以是比较难的题目，如“学习第二语言时你选修的课程中，哪一门课最有用/最没用，为什么？”

这种方法有两条优点。第一便于设计。第二可以变化题目的难易水平：或者更换题目，或者决定让不让学习者事先有准备时间。

其缺点仍然是：所测验的不是在最正常情况下使用口语的能力。正常情况应该是自然而然地与别人交往，能够根据对方的反应调整自己所说的话。

11.7.2.5 面试

面试要求每一个学习者至少有10-15分钟与主考人谈话。可以用来测验学习者能否使用范围比较广泛的语言。这种面试要求主考人事先决定要诱导学习者说些什么，而且事先准备好可能会诱发出这种话的问题或题目。例如，一次面试可以包括以下几条：

1. 打招呼，自我介绍。

2. 谈论个人的事，如家，家庭，教育，嗜好等。
3. 谈论过去或将来——事业上的计划或最近的假期。
4. 让学习者了解有关主考人的事情。
5. 告别。

这样一次简短的面试能测验些什么内容，与应试学习者的水平有很大关系。主考人员的充分准备也很重要。

这种形式的最大优点是，它确实能测出学习者在不可预示的交往中使用语言的能力，因此这种口语测验是比以上提到的方法更为有效的。

其缺点为太费时间，如果应试者人数很多，则需要很多主考人。此外，其可靠性也受到两个因素的影响。一是评分是主观的。二是应试者在特定的时间参加考试，考场可能会使他感到紧张，这时的语言运用可能反映不了其实际水平。

11.7.2.6 口语能力测验应包括什么？

如果把以上五种测验口语的方法加以比较，我们发现：

语言	评分	信度	单独效度	可否在实验室进行
朗读	客观	✓	×	可以
会话片断	客观	✓	×	可以
视觉刺激材料	带主观性	?	×	可以
口语作文	主观	×	×	可以
面试	主观	×	✓	不可以

看来只有面试是测验口语能力效度较高的方法。但从实用性和信度来看，面试也存在一些问题。如果中国的语言测验要包括口语能力的话，能够在语言实验室进行的测验方法大概是最为现实的。包含3-4种上述方法的测验也能比较全面地反映学习者的口语技能。在大多数中学和大学，面试方法只能偶尔使用，因为不太现实。但是在

某些情况下，如出国学习和在国内从事外事工作的人员参加的水平测验，面试则是必不可少的组成部分。

11.7.3 口语测验的评分

为了减少口语测验评分中的主观性，评分人应事先做些准备工作。与写作评分一样，评分人有必要开个会，共同决定准确性和流利性各应占多大比重。如果用的是视觉刺激法或口语作文法，他们需要讨论决定学习者应该提供哪些信息，应该使用怎样的语言结构和词汇，整个口语表达应该是如何组织的。

在此基础上，评分人还应设计出每个题目的评分标准。在大多数情况下这种标准不应以本族语讲话人为参照，而是对自己的学习者做出现实的评估：优、中、差各应是什么水平。评分标准要尽可能详细地设计。不过，如果采用印象评分法，评分标准用一两句话描写出0-5分的各自的标准也就够了。例如，用11.5.4节中的图表，让应试者看图说话，标准可以描写如下：

- 0分：学习者完全不能用语言表达图表中的信息。
- 1分：学习者表达自己的意思十分困难。由于有语音、语法、和词汇方面的错误，很难听懂他的话。
- 2分：虽然学习者表达自己的意思时有相当的困难，但是经过努力，能够听得出他在试图有条有理地完成考试任务。
- 3分：学习者基本上完成了考试任务。尽管他犯了许多错误，有时也吞吞吐吐。但还没有严重影响其可懂性。
- 4分：讲的话容易听懂，基本上正确，组织得好，错误很少，犹豫的地方少。
- 5分：对提供的信息作出精辟的总结。发音并不十全十美，也有些语法错误，但是属于次要的错误，丝毫不影响其可懂性。

11.8 结论

本章试图说明，测验学习者使用语言的能力有多种方法。上述某些方法确实有现实困难，但是为了使测试对课堂教学带来良好的影响，我们认为测验至少应该包含某些项目。在各种程度的语言测验中，多数应该可以包括上述某些客观评分的项目。口语测验和写作测验需要事先计划和组织工作。我们认为，要想让学习者发展使用语言的能力，这种工作是必要的，是值得做的。

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第十二章 从心理语言学和第二语言 习得理论看语言教学法

第一章讲到，每一种语言教学法都公开或不公开地以某种**看法**为基础，这种**看法**回答“语言是什么”和“语言是如何学会的”两大问题。对这两个问题的回答决定着语言大纲和语言学习活动的**设计**；反过来，**设计**又决定着**程序**：教师和学生课堂上实际做些什么，使用何种教材。

在这最后一章，我们将讨论四种教学法：语法-翻译法，听说法，实际教学法，和克拉什的自然法。我们将讨论这四种教学法的**看法、设计和程序**，分析各种方法在多大程度上遵循、忽视或低估心理语言学和第二语言习得中的研究证据，不论是在理论上还是在实践上。

12.1 语法-翻译法

12.1.1 对语言和学习的看法

语法-翻译法认为，文学材料中的句子是语言的基本单位，语言是由一组描写规则构成的，规则规定着如何组音成词，组词成句。衡量一种语言的知识就是看学习者是否熟知这些规则，是否能够迅速、准确地把母语译成第二语言或把第二语言译成母语。

其对语言学习的看法强调记忆语法规则和词汇的重要性。通过彻底的学习和在翻译练习中的使用，语法规则和词汇项目最后牢牢

地存储在记忆之中。一旦存于记忆，第二语言的知识将会迅速地、自动地用于其他翻译任务。

语法-翻译法对语言的看法和对学习的看法都不够全面，似乎忽视或低估了以下几点：

1. 句子层次以上还有语言结构存在。
2. 语言规则的功能是传达意义。
3. 语法和语义情景对意义的影响，冗余现象对帮助理解的重要性。
4. 长期记忆中的非语言性信息在产生和理解语言中的作用。
5. 任何语言中，某些句型和词汇项目比其他句型和词汇项目出现更频繁，因此也更有用，更容易记忆。
6. 利用结构知识去用第二语言做比较现实的事情十分有助于把这种知识牢牢存于长期记忆。

12.1.2 设计和程序

12.1.2.1 目标、大纲和活动

纯粹的语法-翻译法教程的目标是能够用第二语言迅速、准确地进行阅读和翻译。其教学大纲以文学语言为基础，强调准确性。它以一组书面课文为基础，系统介绍语法和词汇。主要教学活动是逐字阅读课文，分析语法结构，在语境中分析词汇的意义。然后让学习者用死记硬背的方式练习这些结构和词汇，并完成课文后面的笔头作业。

这些目标、大纲和活动似乎忽视或低估了以下几点：

1. 只学会用文学语言不一定满足每个学习者的需要。
2. 逐字阅读课文不是人们通常用的阅读方式。
3. 通常文章不是为了示范语法结构而写的。
4. 词汇项目和语法结构在不同语境可能会有不同的意义。

5. 读懂文字材料要借助于冗余现象和普通常识。
6. 只会机械地、有控制地练习语言结构不能保证在实际生活中能够迅速、正确地运用这些结构。
7. 语言运用总是有一定目的的。
8. 如果练习第二语言的活动范围太窄,而且千篇一律,学习者的学习动力会受到影响。

12.1.2.2 教师、学生和教材的作用

作为教科书的控制者的教师, (在英语作为外语的学习环境中) 是一切语言输入的来源。他们必须认真地备课, 以便能够逐句地讲解课文中的结构和词汇意义。教师组织练习, 保证一切输出都是正确的。他们还应该能够回答学习者可能会问到的一切结构或词汇问题。

学习者是教师的被动的跟随者。他们听教师讲解课文, 努力记住每课后面的词汇表, 要会使用结构规则和词汇去完成布置的作业。除了提出有关语法或词汇的问题, 不期望学习者主动用第二语言去做任何事情。

教材就是一本教科书。课文、语法讲解、词汇表和练习都按其结构和词汇的复杂程度, 从易到难排列起来。对大纲上规定要教授的结构和词汇, 教师几乎给予同样的重视: 教授和练习的时间相同。教材各章的形式一般完全相同。

语法-翻译法对教师、学生和教材的看法似乎忽视或低估了以下几点:

1. 学习者是单个的个人, 其兴趣和经历可以用作语言学习环境和练习情景。
2. 语法规则和词汇项目出现在课文之外的情景中可能会有不同的意义。
3. 教师一旦把课文彻底讲解一遍之后, 第二遍处理课文时, 实

际上就没有什么工作可做的了。教师的作用是很有限的。

4. 提倡教师要能回答一切问题，会使教师担心学生提问题，而不是欢迎他们提问题。这对课堂气氛可能会有不良影响。

5. 鼓励学生把第二语言当作知识去学可能会使他们难以理解这一事实：第二语言与母语一样，可以用来去做有趣的，相关的事情。

6. 鼓励学生被动地学习、听教师的话，就意味着他们对自己学习的成败不负多大责任。

7. 语言中的某些结构和词汇比另外一些结构和词汇出现频率高，也更有用。这一事实应在教科书中有所反映。

12.1.3 结论

如果一个第二语言学习班的目标只是培养学生能用第二语言为了某种具体目的而阅读（例如，能够阅读有关化学、经济学、地理学的学术性书籍和文章），下面这种修改过的语法-翻译法可能会满足学习者的需要。其做法是：

1. 作为语言输入，使用的课文中有关专业知识的文章应占很大比重，而且类型不同，难易程度不同。

2. 重点教授这类课文中出现频率最高的句子结构和词汇。

3. 指出专业文章的一般语篇结构与其意义的关系。（例如，化学实验报告一般遵循一定的顺序；顺序的各个阶段用下列语言标记说明……。）

4. 适当说明，由于阅读目的不同，同样的文章阅读方式也不同。

如果第二语言学习班的目标不仅仅是培养学习者能够阅读这种语言，那么仅用语法-翻译法教授是不够的。

12.2 听说法

12.2.1 对语言和学习的看法

听说法常引以自豪的是，它对语言和学习的看法是“科学的”。它对语言的看法基于可以科学地观察和描写的东西，即人类的话语。与语法-翻译法相同，听说法也以句子为基本的描写单位。象物理学那样，科学家把物质分成越来越小的组成成分，听说法把句子分成越来越小的单位，直到直接组成成分，也就是说到这个层次上语言不能再分了。例如：

The-chicken-s-eat-worm-s-in-the-garden

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

这样一分析便可看出，哪些类别的项目能够或不能够出现在哪一个成分空位上（1-9个位置）；还能看出，每一空位上的各个类别中的哪些词汇项目能够或不能够与其他类别的词汇在其他空位上相结合。这样，便可以描写语言的形态结构和句法结构。

听说法把语言看成一组音位、形态、句法系统。系统的每一个层次上的每一个项目都有自己所占空位的规则，以及与其他项目结合的规则。所以，懂得一种语言就是要懂得这种语言的规则系统，以便能够把正确项目用于正确的空位上，而且只产生正确的第二语言的句子。

听说法对学习的看法也声称是科学的，因为它只涉及可以观察到的东西。其理论基础是行为主义心理学。行为主义心理学认为，学习任何一种新的行为都是在某些行为种类与其后果之间建立一种心智上的联系。这种联系的建立是靠一系列的**刺激-反应-奖励连锁**；多次重复这种连锁之后，便可学到理想中的新的行为。这种看法来自于对动物的实验，后来转用于第二语言学习者。学习第二语言被看作是学习一套新的语言行为或习惯。学习这些习惯靠的是记

忆对各种具体刺激做出一套得体的反应。学习者学习第二语言的规则系统靠的是一个结构一个结构地操练第二语言。

- 例如：1. 刺激：I like cooking.
2. 反应：I like cooking.
3. 刺激：eat
4. 反应：I like eating.
5. 刺激：they
6. 反应：They like eating.
7. 刺激：read
8. 反应：They like reading.

等等。操练的设计形式使学习者不太可能说出错句。学习者应该只听到和产生正确的语言，而且应该常常受到奖励（教师的表扬）。学习者对某种刺激的反应必须达到脱口而出的水平，真正学到了这种新的语言习惯后，才能从一种结构转到学习另一种结构。与培养自动化的准确性相比，所作反应的意义是次要的。

听说法对语言和学习看法似乎忽视或低估了以下几点：

1. 语言结构在句子层次之上仍然存在。
2. 自然的口头语言往往不严格遵守各个结构层次上的规则系统。形式上完全正确的口头语言在某些情况下听起来反而有些别扭。
3. 口头语言受到使用情景的影响。
4. 讲话人的意图会影响特定意义的表达方式。因此，一种形式可能会有多种意义，或者说一种意义可以用多种不同形式来表达。
5. 观察不到的、非语言性知识对产生和理解任何语言都起着重要作用。
6. 人们记忆对自己有意义的语言更容易些。
7. 人们记忆的是意义，而不是实际使用的词。
8. 能够在课堂上对某种刺激始终作出正确反应，并不意味着学

习者在正常交际中的不易预示的环境中，也能使用操练过的语言结构。

9. 儿童习得母语时，他们得到的反馈主要是关于得体性和所表达意义的准确性，而不是关于所用的结构是否正确。总是强调形式的正确，而不强调形式所表达的意义，是不符合自然习得过程的。

12.2.2 设计和程序

12.2.2.1 目标、大纲和活动

听说法的最终目标是培养学习者具有接近本族语者的口语能力，其标准就是看能否用类似本族语者的发音，始终产生正确的第二语言的句子。这就意味着要确切知道哪种项目序列可以占据句中的哪一个成份空位，而且要能够产生适合特定语境的正确句子序列。

听说法大纲列出句子层次以下的规则，往往强调母语与第二语言结构不同的地方，认为这种差别对学习来说最为困难。大纲还列出操练和使用结构时所需要的词汇项目。大纲强调听和说。新的语言结构在完全养成口语习惯之前不用文字形式出现。

教学活动的种类不多。用对话来为结构提供语境。学习者要会背诵这些对话，对话中的结构被单独提出来，并通过操练和替换练习记住这些结构。强调严格控制的活动，这样可以最大限度地减少学习者的错误。练习在实际生活中使用语言的活动不被重视。

听说法的目标、大纲和活动似乎忽视或低估了以下几点：

1. 成人或青年时期才开始学习第二语言的人大都不可能达到本族语者水平。
2. 学习者的需要和兴趣是多种多样的。
3. 句子层次以上也有组织结构。
4. 语境对产生和理解口头语言十分重要。

5. 文学语言与口头语言之间是有差别的。
6. 背诵不自然的对话中的结构和词汇不能很好地培养学习者在实际生活中运用语言。
7. 口头语言中出现错误是正常的。
8. 对正在学习的东西感兴趣，并参与进去，有助于学习者的记忆。

12.2.2.2 教师、学生和教材的作用

教师通过自己的语言运用和教材提供第二语言的正确模式。他们提供第二语言的刺激，学生提供正确的第二语言反应。反应对了，教师表扬，以资鼓励；反应错了，教师纠正。教师控制着课堂上的一切交际。这种交际一般是教师与学生之间进行。不鼓励学生与学生之间交际，因为这会造成使用错误的语言。

学习者要对教师的刺激产生正确的反应。不鼓励他们自己使用第二语言，因为这会引起错误。他们在操练和练习中所表达的意义是次要的，形式的正确才是首要的。所以，他们不是在学习如何“表达意义”，而是在学习如何“表达行为”。

第二语言输入全部来自教材中的对话和句型操练。除了课本和课文录音，不鼓励增加其他材料。设计对话的目的是为了介绍语法规则，不是为了说明这种语言如何运用。句型操练集中练习这些语法规则，通过严格控制学习者的输出，可以减少他们犯错误的可能性。

听说对教师、学生和教材的作用的看法似乎忽视或低估了以下几点：

1. 总是强调别犯错误会使学生不敢运用第二语言。
2. 只给学生提供“完美”的输入是不实际的，学生会对付不了课堂之外的第二语言。
3. 把课堂交际限于教师与学生之间，会影响学生在课堂上讲话

的总量。

4. 把第二语言以可运用的形式存于长期记忆的方法之一，是让学生在课堂上练习使用这种语言。

5. 讲话的目的是表达意义和意图，让听话人听懂。语法形式和词汇只有负载意义时才是重要的。

6. 鼓励学生当被动的、不怀疑的语言接收者，而不让他们做积极的、有实验精神的语言使用者，不足以培养他们到实际生活中使用语言。

7. 规定十分死板的教材严重影响教师的积极性，使他们不能使教材和教法符合学生的需要和兴趣。

8. 如果教师表示承认并设法满足学生的需要和兴趣，会提高学生学第二语言的动力。

12.2.3 结论

与语法-翻译法相比，听说法的确承认，能够产生和听懂第二语言是重要的，但它为学习者将来应付实际生活中的正常口头语言只提供了一部分训练。古板地强调说出正确形式，而把表达的意义放在次要地位，往往使学习者的第二语言结构知识“固定”于长期记忆，但其运用结构去表达和理解交际意图的能力是十分有限的。结构与对话和句型操练联系起来：对话引出结构，操练练习结构。学习者没有机会跳出这种窄狭的语境去练习使用这些结构。所以，要想在实际生活中运用第二语言知识是十分困难的。因此有人批评听说法，说它培养出来的学习者懂得不少，但不能运用第二语言去做任何事情。

语法-翻译法和听说法都会使句子层次以下的第二语言规则“固定”在长期记忆中。优秀学习者应该知道什么样的语言序列符合这种语言的规则系统，什么序列是不符合。这些学习者也可能会成功地发展自己的词汇知识，不过对大脑词库中的词频和词的有用性不

加区分。但是，这两种方法都不能培养学习者去应付自然的语言运用，尤其是口头语言的运用。因为，在实际运用中，人们不总是按规则讲话的，而且能够迅速地、自然地、即席地、得体地表达和理解意义，与语法百分之百的准确同等重要。

12.3 交际语言教学法

12.3.1 对语言和学习者的看法

交际法认为语言是用来交际的。与语法-翻译法和听说法一样，交际法承认语言由一组可描写的规则系统组成，但进一步认为，应该研究这组系统是用来做什么的。学习任何第二语言的规则系统的目的，都是为了能够运用这种语言在某种场合下得体地表达意义。交际法承认，在任何语言中：

1. 相同的语法结构在不同语境中会完成不同的功能。如：“I'm tired.” 可以是陈述、抱怨、请求停止某项活动、建议做一件不同的事情，等。

2. 不同的语法结构在不同的语境中可以完成相同的功能。如，“Room 210 is nice and warm.” 和 “Shall we use Room 210.” 的结构不同，但二者都可用来表达一项建议。

因此，懂得一种语言既需要懂得这种语言的形式，又需要懂得在某种场合下使用某种形式是否得体。

懂得什么语言形式在什么语境出现是得体的，其中包括懂得如何使自己的语句与前面已经说过的话或文句是关联的。所以，学习者还必须知道句子层次以上的语篇规则。不论是在讲故事或开玩笑，还是与朋友谈话或与官员们交往，不论是在邮局寄包裹还是逛市场，还是在描写自己、自己的家庭成员或其住宅，都要知道第二语言句子的正常结构和句子顺序。除此之外，高明的学习者还应该

知道，用第二语言做事情时，参与者、地点、谈论的题目等因素都会影响到特定形式的得体性。总之，学习者不仅需要知道第二语言的结构规则，而且必须知道这种语言的**使用规则**。

交际法对“第二语言是如何学习的”，没有一种统一的、前后一致的看法。主要有两种观点。第一种观点认为，第二语言学习在许多方面类似第一语言习得，是一种“创造性的构建”过程。通过假设的建立和检验，学习者逐渐地建立起越来越正确的第二语言结构图象（过渡语）。通过观察自己理解别人讲的话是否正确，听话人对自己话语的反应是不是自己所期望的反应，学习者可以发现自己对第二语言结构和假设是否正确。至于不通过正式教授第二语言结构能否达到“创造性的构建”，不同研究者有不同的看法。最激进的看法是克拉什的观点：他认为第二语言习得是不可避免的，只要学习者的学习动力很大，并有足够的、恰当的语言输入。这种观点在第九章中提到过，并在本章12.4节中继续进行讨论。

第二种观点认为，第二语言学习是“技能学习”。学习一种语言犹如学习任何一种新的技能，比如骑自行车。学骑自行车要从最基本的技能开始：掌握平衡，转弯，停车，骑起来。当基本技能已经运用自如，不必再有意识地进行思考，便可骑到城里的车辆拥挤、变化莫测的自行车道上。学习一种语言也是如此。学习者先学最基本的东西：语法和词汇；然后在有意义的语境中有控制地和自由地练习使用这些基本知识，直到运用得得心应手，便可用到变化莫测的自然交往中去。

交际法对语言和学习看法似乎忽视或低估了以下几点：

1. 英语的或其他任何语言的**使用规则**和语篇结构，至今还没有全部描写出来，因此还不可能象结构规则那样系统地进行教授。这一点往往没有对大纲设计者、教材编写者和教师讲清楚。所以，第二语言学习班的目标规定得不够现实或不可能达到。

2. 彻底掌握语法和词汇是发展第二语言能力的必要基础。交际

法急于教授语言的**运用**，而并不仅仅是教授语言的**形式**。于是，有些实际工作人员在大多数第二语言学习条件下，低估了（至少部分）正式教授的必要性。

3. 由于不敢肯定人们到底是如何学习第二语言的，所以大纲设计者、教材编写者和教师不能保证自己教授第二语言的方法是最有效的。

12.3.2 设计和程序

12.3.2.1 目标、大纲和活动

规定一个语言教学班的目标之前，必须首先了解学习者的需要是什么。为了确定他们的需要，必须进行**需要分析**。这种分析首先要考虑学习者为什么学习第二语言，他们需要与别人谈论哪些话题，将来会遇到哪些使用第二语言的情景，以及在这些情景中他们将扮演什么角色。然后，必须决定学习者需要学会哪些词汇，哪些语言结构，哪些功能，以及要达到的准确程度，以便实现自己的交际目的。这些结构和功能则成为制订大纲的基础。能够迅速、准确、得体地运用这些结构和功能去达到自己的目的，便成了学习班的目标。对于有具体学习目的的学习者，如飞行员，饭店工作人员，要参加“托福”考试的人，确定他们的需要是能够办到的。对于世界上大多数第二语言学习者，学习“没有明确理由”，确定他们的需要则不是件容易的事。

虽然对于学习问题有不同看法，但是大多数实际工作人员认为，为了促进学习，课堂上应该强调具有下列特点的教学活动：

1. 包含尽可能真实的交际——要交流的内容学习者是不知道的，而他们的确想知道。

2. 包含有意义的任务；这种任务要求学习者用第二语言去做事情。如，在地图上找到某些地方；在讨论中得出具体的结论；成功地向他人传达指示；寻找并提供信息。

3. 涉及到有用的语言——即学习者可能要在课堂之外使用的语言，用之谈论的话题和所处情景对学习者是有益的，相关的，有趣的。

听说法的教学目标、大纲和教学活动似乎忽视或低估了以下几点：

1. 所有的学习者都必须学习第二语言的基本结构规则，才能实现学习这种语言的目的。

2. 进行彻底的“需要分析”是很费时间的，开支也很大，所以往往不够现实。

3. 对许多学习班来说，除了某些词汇和语言结构，很难确定全部学习者的共同需要。可能更为现实的做法是，鼓励教师去发现学习者的兴趣何在，至少在有些时候根据他们的兴趣进行教学和练习。这样做比过于担心他们将来的实际需要更好一些。

4. 设计和组织具有上述特点的教学活动给教师提出许多新的要求。教师不一定愿意这样做，或没有能力这样做。

12.3.2.2 教师、学生和教材的作用

教师应该知道学习者的需要和兴趣，而且要能设想出各种方法去利用这种了解选择语言输入，创造比较现实的练习语言的活动；哪怕只有很短时间这样做也是好的。教师不能设想，单凭教科书就能提供足够的、合适的语言输入，所以他们需要积极寻找其他输入来源。教师应该比较灵活，能够成功地组织以教师为中心的、有控制的第二语言形式教学。又能组织比较自由的、控制不严格的练习提高学生的流利程度。这种灵活性要求教师善于教学，具有良好的第二语言技能，而且能够创造良好的，互相配合的课堂气氛。这样的教师敢于允许学习者自己练习，或者两人一组，或多人一组，去提高语言的流利程度，所用语言不受严格限制。他们知道，学习者会尽力在提供的语境中去使用第二语言。他们不用担心学习者的错

误，因为他们有信心识别最重要的错误，并在以后有控制的活动中加以纠正。

学习者在自己的学习中应该是积极的参与者。他们应该让教师知道自己学习第二语言的兴趣和目的是什么。他们应该理解，必须学习词汇和语言结构，才能实现自己的学习目的。他们会与教师相配合，把自由练习活动搞好；他们会有意识地努力利用所学的第二语言知识（和普通知识）去完成布置的任务，即使自己并不确切知道所需的词汇和语言结构。学习者会互相鼓励，互相学习，帮助创造一个良好的课堂气氛。

交际法教材旨在帮助学习者在得体的语境中学习语言结构，并练习使用这些结构。教材的主要来源可能是一本教科书；课本以传统方式、从易到难地介绍语言结构，并提供一些练习活动。有的教材也可以是让学习者三三两两地共同完成某些任务；或者是用第二语言做游戏——完成一个任务或解决一个具体问题。教材可以是“真实的”。所谓“真实教材”就是指报纸、地图、广告、漫画、图表、新闻广播、天气预报等语言输入。这种材料不是专门给第二语言学习者编写的。

交际法对教师、学生和教材的作用的看法似乎忽视或低估了以下几点：

1. 大多数第二语言教师培训班仍然强调提高教师的第二语言水平，或强调语言理论的某些方面，而不是强调示范和练习交际法课堂所要求的教学技能和课堂管理技能。
2. 许多非本族人第二语言教师感到，这种方法对教师的语言水平要求很高，而他们对自己的第二语言能力缺乏信心。
3. 许多第二语言教师的工资很低，生活条件差。他们对任何需要花大力气的变革都没有热情。
4. 评估教师是看考试成绩，而大部分考试并不测验运用第二语言的能力。

5. 在大部分情况下, 学习者的动力是要通过考试。所以他们与教师一样, 不愿意在与考试无关的活动上花很多时间。

6. 在许多文化中, 教师失去对课堂的正式的、明确的控制, 是不得体的。所以, 教师和学生都感到难以做到这一点。

7. 往往找不到形式变化多样的教材。很少有教师能够利用现有教材用各种方法练习第二语言, 他们没有受过这方面的训练。

12.3.3 结论

显然, 在许多第二语言学习环境中, 采用交际法受到许多实际问题的限制。但是, 如果我们根据第二至第十章的内容总结一下交际法的**看法、设计和程序**, 就会发现:

1. 对语言的看法强调语言是传达意义的工具。它承认, 句子层次之上还存在语言结构, 对于如何得体地表达意义和理解意义, 语境是至关重要的。因此, 交际法强调, 在任何语言运用中, 非语言性信息是十分重要的。

2. 交际法对学习的看法不太明确。但是大部分人认为, 语言输入应该是有意义的, 而且谈论的题目和进行的活动是与学生有关的, 是他们感兴趣的。这样有助于学习语言。

3. 交际法的教学大纲应该以学生的需要为基础。如何迅速地、经济地确认这些需要, 还有不同意见。对于学习者要有多少共同需要才能教授语言的结构, 也有不同看法。

4. 人们一致认为, 教学活动应该为运用语言提供机会。应该根据学习者的需要决定在准确性和流利性上各花多少时间。

5. 教师和学生课堂上的作用以良好的课堂气氛为先决条件。教师努力使(至少)部分教学活动满足学生的兴趣, 从而使学生的学习动力不至于下降。教师和学生互相配合, 这样可以顺利地调换控制严格的和不严格的教学活动。

6. 教材的设计应该使教师和学生能够保持准确性和流利性之间

的某种平衡。至少某些语言输入应该是“真实的”，使学生能够对付课堂之外的第二语言运用。

交际法没有明确说明应该如何教授**使用规则**。它没有统一的学习理论，也不能说明一种教学大纲应该在何种程度上满足学生的需要才算是比较现实，准确性和流利性应该各占多大比重。尽管如此，与语法-翻译法和听说法相比，交际法确实更加符合心理语言学和第二语言习得理论和科研证据。在过去的5至10年中，就连交际法的激进派也再次承认，语法和词汇知识是其他一切语言技能的基础。因此，在大多数情况下（见12.4节的自然法），人们不再认为纯粹的“交际法”是教授第二语言的有效方法。人们再次认识到，必须在教授形式和练习形式之间保持某种平衡。

12.4 自然法

12.4.1 对语言和学习的看法

自然法的理论基础是史蒂文·克拉什在美国发展起来的第二语言习得理论。自然法对语言的看法并不十分明确。它认为语言是传达信息的手段。为了交流信息，必须知道很多词汇。语法结构是系统地词汇连成信息的手段。懂得一种语言就要求学习者能够运用这种语言自然地交际，但语言不一定十分准确。

自然法对学习的看法据说是以实证研究的结果为基础的。克拉什说，这种研究表明，第一语言和第二语言习得之间有许多相似之处。第一语言儿童运用与生俱来的语言普通性（语言习得机制），再根据接收到的语言输入和自己参加的交往，“创造性地构建”第一语言的形式。第二语言学习者也能够自然地习得第二语言，只要给他们提供足够的、可以理解的语言输入。只要有水平合适（ $i+1$ ）、分量充足的输入，（至少是英语）学习者会依照事先决定

的顺序自然地习得某些语法词素。这些词素和新的可以理解的语言输入将为学习者打下基础，通过相似的“创造性构建”过程继续发展自己的语言系统知识。因此，正式教授第二语言的结构是不必要的，也不会大大促进自然习得过程。需要多大量的输入才能对学习者的习得过程有帮助，才能被学习者吸收（被习得了的输入），取决于每个人的情感筛选。情感筛选严格的学习者没有学习动力，使用第二语言时感到紧张或尴尬，所以能够习得的语言输入是很少的。有自信心的、热情的学习者，情感筛选不太严格，他们会去积极寻求尽可能多的语言输入，而且其中大部分会被吸收。

自然法对语言和学习的看法似乎忽视或低估了以下几点：

1. 语法规则知识在把词汇连接成可理解信息方面是重要的。词汇连接得不好会造成整体错误，会严重影响到交际（见第七章）。
2. 关于“自然顺序”的研究是否可靠，没有统一意见。如果不存在什么“自然顺序”，第二语言学习者“创造性地构建”其他语言结构的基础又是什么？
3. 有证据表明，正式教授语言结构能够提高学习速度，使所学结构使用起来流利、准确。如果是这样，学习对习得有积极的影响。
4. “可理解的输入”的定义应该更加清楚，这样，教师才能在课堂上提供这种输入。

12.4.2 设计和程序

12.4.2.1 目标、大纲和活动

自然法的教学目标是把第二语言的初学者培养成中级学习者。具体的学习目标因学习者的不同而不同。因此教学大纲也只有大致的规定。人们承认，不同的学习班可能有稍微不同的需要，教师有责任确认学习者需要什么。一般强调学习使用口头语言去做日常生

活中的事情。这也反映出采用这种方法的都是哪种类型的学习者：迁居美国的移民或刚刚到达美国的学生。设计的教学活动以可以理解的语言输入为根据，输入又以“当时当地”情景为基础：即教室和教室里的人物。在学习者准备好之前，不要求他们用第二语言说话（这很象学习母语的儿童的“沉默阶段”）。所以，初期的教学活动用不着讲话。学习者用手势或体势表示理解了。一旦学习者准备说话了，输入也就改变了，要求学习者先是作出简单的回答，然后逐渐作出复杂的回答。随着学习者的水平不断提高，教学活动的范围也不断扩大，直到把课堂之外的世界包括进来。

自然法的教学目标、大纲和教学活动似乎忽视或低估了以下几点：

1. 多数教师为自己的班设计大纲感到十分困难。
2. 世界上有许多第二语言学习环境是统一规划的。专门为具体学习者设计大纲的可能性是很小的。
3. 来自众多文化背景的学习者会发现，为自己的学习负直接责任，决定何时开始讲话，都是十分困难的。

12.4.2.2 教师、学生和教材的作用

自然法，特别是在开始阶段，强调以教师为中心。教师必须为学习者提供连续不断的可理解的语言输入。经过“当时当地”的初级阶段之后，这种输入要以学习者的需要和兴趣为基础。为了确认学习者的需要和兴趣，为了使他们的情感筛选不太严格，使他们尽可能地从中受益，教师必须保持良好的课堂气氛和集体活力。

学习者应该积极参与自己的第二语言水平的发展。他们对自己的语言发展速度负有责任：他们自己决定何时开始讲话，想说什么，以及如何表达自己的信息。他们还负责输入的重点放在哪里——他们让教师知道自己的需要和兴趣。他们还要负责输入的可理解

程度，因为是由他告诉教师语言输入是否在恰当的水平上。

自然法的教科书几乎没有。由于强调输入的基础是课堂上的“当时当地”情景，到后来是更大的第二语言环境，所以“真实的”教材起着极为重要的作用。这些材料要由教师去找，然后还得决定如何使用。

自然法对教师、学生和教材的作用的看法似乎忽视或低估了以下几点：

1. 教师，特别是非本族语教师，会感到难以提供连续不断的、可以理解的第二语言输入。
2. 如果不处在第二语言环境，保持连续不断的输入更加困难，因为那里“真实的”材料是稀少的。
3. 大多数第二语言学习者希望别人告诉他们应该学习什么，怎样学。

12.4.3 结论

必须知道些什么才能交流信息？对此，自然法没有明确的观点。自然法对学习的看法是，第一语言和第二语言习得有极为相似之处。这些相似之处是否站得住脚，仍有很大争论。初期的可理解的输入要以“当时当地”情景（即课堂上）为基础，这种观点是有道理的。强调需要一个良好的课堂环境，以鼓励学习者利用一切机会运用第二语言，这种主张也是对的。把责任推给教师，让他们根据学习者的需要去设计大纲，这在某些第二语言环境也许是可行的，因为自然法本来就是在那种环境中发展起来；但是对于不处于第二语言环境的非本族语的大多数教师来说，恐怕是极为困难的。自然法设想学习者清楚地知道自己为什么学习第二语言，能够告诉教师他们想学习什么。自然法还设想教师具备足够的热情和技能，去围绕着学习者的需要设计大纲，而且能够找到教材作为大纲的语言输入。这些设想在大多数第二语言学习环境中是不符合实际情况

的。

自然法也许能够完成自己宣称要做的事——给第二语言学习者提供“生存性的”语言技能，能在第二语言环境中流利地交际，但不一定十分准确。但是，在非第二语言环境，学习者的需要不太明确，而且多种多样，教师和学习者也不太有信心，教材也很难找到，自然法就不合适了。

12.5到底采用哪种方法或哪几种方法的结合？

世界各地有数以百万计的第二语言学习者，所学语言不同，学习目的也不同。他们所处的环境对教育有不同的文化态度，对教师和学习者在课堂上的关系也有不同的看法，各种设备条件更是有天壤之别。所以，不能期望某种“理想的方法”能适用于一切第二语言学习环境。每种学习环境必须自己决定哪一种或哪几种方法的结合对自己的情况最有效，最现实。为了尽可能准确地作出这一决定，在**看法-设计-程度**的各个层次上都有几个问题要作出回答。可以设想对这些问题的回答构成一个连续体，两端之间有很大区别。下面，我们提供一些连续体两端可以找到的回答。在大多数第二语言学习环境中，对问题的回答会在两个极端之间。

1. 什么是语言？懂得一种语言意味着什么？

A. 懂得一种语言要求学习者知道语言的语音、结构规则和词汇，还要知道如何把它们结合成正确的口头和文字语句。

B. 懂得一种语言要求学习者通过正确组合语音、结构、词汇，而且要在所处语境中是得体的，以使用口头语言或文字形式来表达自己的思想和意图。

2. 学习一种第二语言要经过哪些过程？

A. 学习一种语言需要有意识地学习和记忆语言的词汇和结构规则。在自然的、有意义的语境中介绍规则和词汇并不重要；重

要的是提供机会使词汇和规则学得准确。在有控制的语境能够准确使用第二语言，就能保证在课堂之外的实际生活中准确使用语言。

B. 如果学习者接触足够的、符合他们水平的自然语言输入，而且这种输入能鼓励他们尽可能使用语言，第二语言的结构规则和词汇便可无意识地习得。正式教授这些规则是白白浪费时间。

3. 教学大纲应该包括什么？

A. 一切学习者需要掌握的东西都是一样的：语言的词汇、语音、结构规则。

B. 不同的学习者需要知道如何运用第二语言去做不同的事情。他们需要掌握什么词汇和结构完全取决于他们学习第二语言的目的。

4. 什么样的教学活动有助于第二语言学习？

A. 教学活动应该强调整解和产生正确的句子。学习者要能够在各种转换和操作练习中，始终用某种结构产生正确句子，才能开始学习下一个结构。一切教学活动都应由教师严格控制。课堂上的交往都是在教师与学习者之间。不允许学习者听到或产生不正确的第二语言句子。

B. 教学活动应该强调培养运用第二语言时的流利程度。这些活动的主题和情景都应与学习者的需要有关系。应该承认，口头语言中出现一些错误是正常的。教学活动应该多种多样，应该让学习者三三两两地进行交往。

5. 教师的作用是什么？

A. 教师应该按照教科书授课，教师用书是怎么规定的，就怎么上课。他们不应再去寻找或使用其他材料。教师应该是语言的主要楷模，并保证学习者只听到和使用正确的第二语言句子。

B. 教师应该使用各种各样的教材，开展各种各样的教学活动。给学习者提供的语言输入和要求学习者产生的输出都应与其学习目的有关系。教师应有足够的信心和灵活性，允许对所用语言的

控制程度因教学活动的不同而变化，教师的作用也不是固定不变的。

6. 学习者的作用是什么？

A. 学习者应该听教师授课，应该努力记忆结构规则和词汇，正确地完成作业。他们不应该主动地使用第二语言，除非教师让他们这样做。他们得到什么样的输入和应该产生什么样的输出，都不是他们的责任。

B. 学习者应该在自己的学习中起积极作用。他们应该让教师知道自己学习第二语言的目的是什么，并告诉教师所得的语言输入是否合适。只要有些思想或感情需要表达，他们应该在教室里主动使用第二语言。他们被看作是不同的人，都有自己的优点和弱点，都与其他同学有差异。

7. 教材的作用是什么？

A. 教材应该包括教科书和（可能）听力材料。学习活动应该受到严格控制，尽量不让学习者听到或使用不正确的句子。重要的是，做为输入而提供的课文要示范结构规则或词汇的正确用法；课文是否反映出这种语言通常是如何使用的，并不重要。同样设计的练习要训练准确地产生或识别具体形式，不必过多去问造出的句子听起来是否是自然的句子。

B. 所用的材料不应该是专门为第二语言学习者编写的。材料应该来自各种各样的“真实的”来源。教材应该提供各种使用第二语言的机会，在与学习者有关的语境中表达或理解意义。

12.6 结论

每一种第二语言学习环境都多少有些不同。由于这些不同，对**看法、设计、程序**各层次上的问题的回答也就或多或少有所不同。重要的是，负责计划第二语言学习的各个层次上的人员需要知道有

哪些问题要考虑，如何评判所作出的回答。

实际上，提出问题可以看成有两个阶段。第一阶段是为某组学习者回答问题，但是要参照心理语言学和第二语言习得理论对有关语言本质和学习的研究证据。这时，对各个问题的回答表明**最理想**的教学方法应该是什么。

第二个阶段是根据实际情况修改**理想**的方法，要参照对学习的传统态度、考试制度、资金来源、教师确实能够做到的事情。这个阶段的目标是尽量对**理想**的方法少作变动，同时保证在现有的条件下又能够做到。

要作出的让步往往比情愿作出的要多些。但是，如果建立起来的语言项目虽然不够理想，但是能够实现，总比理论上是理想的、实际上是无法实现的语言项目要好。因为，这后一种情况的结果是：参与者都不满意，大有失望之感。

本书中，我们试图说明心理语言学和第二语言习得理论对课堂教学的启示。对许多语言教师来说，这个领域（和其他领域）出现的理论往往是难以理解的，而且感到与自己的实际课堂教学关系甚小。但我们认为，对语言本质和学习的了解能够帮助教师判断：在课堂上哪一种选择最有可能促进语言学习。