

<<第二语言习得概论>>

图书基本信息

书名：<<第二语言习得概论>>

13位ISBN编号：9787810465786

10位ISBN编号：7810465783

出版时间：1999-4-1

出版时间：上海外语教育出版社

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页数：327

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内容概要

《第二语言习得概论》的目的是通过对语言学习者的语言及其形成过程进行讲座来帮助教师把这种模糊的、无意识实施的理论变成明确的、有意识地贯彻的理论。

《第二语言习得概论》主要是针对两种读者而设计的：一是涉此领域、希望全面了解第二语言习得研究概况的学生；二是从事第二语言习得研究、希望全面掌握第二语言习得研究动态的教师。

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it was in fact degenerate, as Chomsky claimed. Empirical studies were able to show that the mother's speech was remarkably wellformed, containing few ungrammatical utterances or sentence fragments. Furthermore this speech was characterized by a number of formal adjustments in comparison to speech used in adult-adult conversations. Snow (1976) lists a number of these: a lower mean length of utterance, the use of sentences with a limited range of grammatical relations, few subordinate and co-ordinate constructions, more simple sentences, the occurrence of tutorial questions (i.e. questions to which the mother already knows the answer) , and, overall, a high level of redundancy. There are also adjustments in pronunciation. Sachs (1977) shows that mothers tune the pitch, intonation, and rhythm to the perceptive sensitivity of the child. These adjustments were considered to constitute a special use of language or register, known as motherese.

2 The functions of 'motherese' Given that mothers do tune their speech in the ways described above, the question arises of what purposes motherese serves. Ferguson (1977) suggests that there are three main functions: (1) an aid to communication, (2) a language teaching aid, and (3) a socialization function. It is the former, however, that motivates motherese. Mothers seek to communicate with their children, and this leads them to simplify their speech in order to facilitate the exchange of meanings. Mothers pay little attention to the formal correctness of their children's speech, but instead attend to the social appropriateness of their utterances. Brown (1977) describes the primary motivation as 'to communicate, to understand and to be understood, to keep two minds focused on the same topic'. Thus if motherese also serves to teach language and to socialize the child into the culture of the parents, it does so only indirectly as offshoots of the attempt to communicate.

3 The basis of adjustments made by mothers Another question concerns how mothers determine the nature and the extent of the modifications which are needed. Gleason and Weintraub (1978) suggest that parents have a general idea of their children's linguistic ability, particularly their ability to understand, but they lack an accurate knowledge of what specific linguistic features their children have mastered. Parents may internalize a model of a 'typical' child of a given age and then adjust their speech upwards and downwards on the basis of feedback from an individual child. Of crucial importance, therefore, is the extent to which the child comprehends what is said to him and the extent to which he signals his comprehension or lack of comprehension to his caretaker. This conclusion is supported by Cross (1977) , who found little evidence that mothers were able to monitor either their own or their children's. Thus, whereas a behaviourist view of language acquisition seeks to explain progress purely in terms of what happens outside the learner, the nativist view emphasizes learner-internal factors. A third view, however, is tenable. This treats the acquisition of language as the result of an interaction between the learner's mental abilities and the linguistic environment. The learner's processing mechanisms both determine and are determined by the nature of the input. Similarly, the quality of the input affects and is affected by the nature of the internal mechanisms. The interaction between external and internal factors is manifest in the actual verbal interactions in which the learner and his interlocutor participate. It follows from this interactionist view of language acquisition that the important data are not just the utterances produced by the learner, but the discourse which learner and caretaker jointly construct.

Three different views regarding the role of input in language development have been discussed. The behaviourist view emphasizes the importance of the linguistic environment, which is treated in terms of stimuli and feedback. The nativist view minimizes the role of the input and explains language development primarily in terms of the learner's internal processing mechanisms. The interactionist view sees language development as the result both of input factors and of innate mechanisms. Language acquisition derives from the collaborative efforts of the learner and his interlocutors and involves a dynamic interplay between external and internal factors.

The discussion of the role of the linguistic environment in SLA which is the main purpose of this chapter is conducted largely within the interactionist framework. However, many of the early studies of input and interaction concerned the acquisition of a first language rather than a second language. The next section, therefore, looks at the way mothers talk to young children.

'Motherese' and L1 acquisition The first challenge to the prevailing nativist views occurred in first language acquisition research. Gradually during the 1970s a considerable bulk of empirical research was built

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up which investigated how mothers talked to their children (e.g. Snow and Ferguson 1977; Waterson and Snow 1978) . As this research served both as a model for similar research in SLA and has also been drawn on directly in justifying some theories of SLA (e.g. Krashen 1981a) , it is important to consider the major findings. These are summarized below.

1 The nature of 'motherese' Much of the early research into the mother's language was concerned with identifying its linguistic properties in order to establish whether input data. On the other hand, the learner can be seen as 'a grand initiator'; that is, he is equipped with just those abilities that are needed to discover the L2, no matter how impoverished the L2 data are. Also, of course, there are intermediate positions in which the learner is seen as actively contributing to SLA, but dependent on the provision of appropriate input. Behaviourist accounts of SLA view the learner as 'a language-producing machine'. The linguistic environment is seen as the crucial determining factor. In this model of learning, input comprises the language made available to the learner in the form of stimuli and also that which occurs as feedback. In the case of the former, the learner's interlocutor models specific forms and patterns which are internalized by the learner imitating them. Thus the availability of suitable stimuli is an important determining factor in SLA. Behaviourist theories emphasize the need to regulate the stimuli by grading the input into a series of steps, so that each step constitutes the right level of difficulty for the level that the learner has reached. Feedback serves two purposes. It indicates when the L2 utterances produced by the learner are correct and so reinforces them, and it also indicates when the utterances are ill formed by correcting them. The regulation of the stimuli and the provision of feedback shape the learning that takes place and lead to the formation of habits.

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《第二语言习得概论》也可供对语言熟练程度测试等方面感兴趣的应用语言学研究人员参考。

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