Some things we know about native languages

- The differences between knowing one language and another are primarily knowing…
  - Different vocabulary
    • Different roots
    • Different morphology and rules of morphological combination
  - Different parameter settings (perhaps in the lexicon of the language)
    • Does the language allow null subjects?
    • Does the verb move to T?
  - Different cultural conventions
    • Standard way to refuse, an invitation, apologize, …
    • Idiomatic meanings for words and word groups
    • Cultural literacy for metaphors and allusions
    • Prescriptive rules

What’s the goal of second language acquisition?

- Certainly, no single goal.
  - To become fluent, near-native (to approximate a native speaker as closely as possible).
  - To become competent, able to communicate in the target language.
  - To satisfy the language requirement in order to graduate and get a high-paying job in your uncle’s Wall Street firm.
  - To impress potential spouses.
  - …

Humans are language machines

- Kids seem to be built to learn language.
  - They learn a system which is more complex than the data they receive.
  - They learn it quickly.
  - They appear to expend very little conscious effort in this pursuit.
  - They reach a very consistent end-state compared to that of other learners.
  - They progress through similar stages within and across languages.
Humans are language machines

- Pidgin/creole results also suggest some kind of “bioprogram” aiding kids in language learning.
- Creoles are the result of innovation from impoverished input
  - probably like regular L1 acquisition anyway
- Innovations across creoles are very similar
  - Articles: 3-way distinction (spec.def., spec.indef., nonspec.). Tense ±Anterior (stative, action distinction), Modality ±Irrealis (future, conditionals), Aspect ±Nonpunctual (progressive, iterative, durative). Two C’s (realized vs. hypothetical).

Adult L2A

- Measured against either monolingual native speakers or simultaneous bilinguals, adults learning a second language seem to share very few of these properties—it seems like adults are not built to learn languages.
  - Appears to be arduous
  - Incomplete success
  - Fossilization
  - ...

Modeling the human capacity for language

- UG provides the parameters and contains the grammatical system that makes use of them.
- LAD sets the parameters based on the PLD. Responsible for getting language to kids.

Critical period

- Lenneberg (1967). Critical periods are rampant in the natural world.
  - CP for developing binocular vision in macaque monkeys, cats.
  - CP for imprinting in birds
  - Delay in cataract surgery can fail to yield sight.
- And in language-related domains too...
  - Genie, kept from language input until 13.7
  - Young kids can recover from CNS damage in ways adults seem not able to.

L2A

- Perhaps the LAD operates in L1A but not in adult L2A, that the language input needs to find its way into the interlanguage some other way.

Critical period

- If exists, best candidate for cause is brain development.
  - Lateralization? Maybe, but probably finished too early.
  - Myelinization (limits plasticity)? Maybe, but probably finished too late. But maybe.
- In the model of acquisition, what goes away?
  - LAD?
  - Plasticity in possible language knowledge (locked in place)?
### Critical period
- Johnson and Newport. Found negative correlation between age of initial exposure to language and eventual performance. Tested subjects' judgments concerning violations of *Subjectivity* (limits possible *wh*-questions, putative universal principle). Rapid drop-off of performance after initial age around 14.
- White and Genesee, Birdsong cite small number of late learners who do seem to reach a level where they are indistinguishable from native speakers.
- So, it seems like there is at least a sensitive period, but certain people (who work hard, care a lot?) can overcome the obstacle.

### Natural order
- Roughly at least, L2'ers seem to acquire the L2 along the same trajectory as one another.
  - Case and word order before *is* and *are*, later *would*, later *have* and *-en*.
- There seems to be some kind of "natural order" of acquisition.
- How might we understand this in terms of that UG picture from before? Any ideas?

### UG access and transfer
- To what extent do second language learners know what “languages are like”? (Do they still know what all the possibilities are?)
- To what extent do second language learners assume that the language they’re learning is like the language they already know?

### Markedness and what languages are like
- Typological universals reduce the number of possible languages.
- Marked implies unmarked
  - having a dual implies having a plural
  - having purple implies having green
  - having *wh*-inversion implies having *wh*-fronting
  - having yes-no inversion implies having *wh*-inversion
  - being able to form relatives on OPREP implies being able to form relatives on IO

### Markedness and what languages are like
- Verb classes (Vendler): Achievement, accomplishment, activity, state.
- Perfective appears on verb class scale in opposite order as imperfective (Spanish as L2).
- Past perfective:
  - achievement < accomplishment < activity < state
- Past imperfective:
  - state < activity < accomplishment < achievement
Markedness and what languages are like

- Sonority hierarchy
  - \( a > i > r > l > n > s > t \)
- Syllables as sonority waves; languages differ on steepness requirements between margin and nucleus.
- Most evidence that we have so far points to a big role for transfer in phonological parameters and not a lot of parameter resetting.
- Yet, the evidence in the phonology might be more readily available.

Bilingual properties

- Fluent bilinguals conversing tend to code-switch or code-mix.
- Where languages can be switched inside a sentence seems to be constrained.
  - Equivalence constraint: where languages “map onto” one another.
  - Free morpheme constraint: Allowed where cutting there doesn’t leave any bound morphemes.

Code-mixing

- When does code-switching/mixing happen?
  - Various functions
    - Quotations of a speaker of the mixed-to language
    - Habitual interjections
    - Reiteration/clarification
    - Topic/comment differentiation
    - Social distance/authority
    - Making distinctions not available in NL

Code-mixing

- MacSwan 1999: Two pools of lexical items, combined by the syntactic computational system. Code mixing = picking some of the words of each sentence from each lexicon. Only requirement is that they fit together—if one language requires agreement between items, agreement must be there.
- Spanish negative no a clitic attaching to following verb, so can't code mix from Spanish to anything else after no. *El no wants to go.
- You can’t double agreement: *He doesn’t quiere ir.
- Greek (3 genders) hard to mix with Spanish and Catalan (2 genders) whenever agreement causes conflict.

UG access and transfer

- Meisel (1997): L2A and L1A have different sequences (negation).
- Flynn (1996): J→E learners can…
  - Set head parameter (Abundant evidence).
  - Obey Subjacency (Universal constraint).
  - Vs. Johnson & Newport (1991): adult C→E learners can’t?!
- Kanno (1996): E→J learners can…
  - Obey ECP (new context, but universal constraint).

UG access and transfer

UG access and transfer

- MacLaughlin (1998): Two parameters of anaphor binding. Moving from [+–] to [–,+] shows evidence of [+,+] for some learners (others perhaps went through [–,–]).
  - Option made available by UG (parameter setting in neither NL nor TL attested in the IL).

Conclusions?

- Universal constraints (also active in L1) constrain IL—would be true even if we were just talking about “speaking L1 with L2 words” (Flynn 1996, Kanno 1996)
- L2 learners (even kids) don’t seem to set the verb movement or null subject parameters for the target language (predicted clustering not observed) (White, Trahey, Hawkins et al.).
- Parameters of binding theory if correctly analyzed do seem to be being reset. The one piece of positive evidence we’ve got.

VYS and development

- Vainikka & Young-Scholten: L2’ers build up their syntactic trees from the bottom; start with a non-complex VP only, transfer head parameter (comparing K/T L1 with I/S L1). Then, TP, AgrP, CP, until full tree.
  - VP stage, very few T elements, no C elements (no embedded clauses, fronted non-subject wh-phrases). Predominantly neg-V and adv-V orders.
  - TP stage, modals, auxes, optional verb movement.
  - AgrP stage, like TP stage but with agreement paradigm acquired.
  - CP embedded clauses, proper wh-movement.
- Paradis et al. (1998): AgrP seems to come before TP in child L2A E→F.

ESF project

  - Nominal Utterance Organization
    - Unconnected nouns—missing structuring power of verb
  - Infinite Utterance Organization
    - Verbs prevalent. No distinction between finite and nonfinite verbs. Limited number of patterns. Pragmatic mode? (Controller first, new information last)
  - Finite Utterance Organization
    - Distinguishes finite & nonfinite
- Vs. avoidance? Productions vs. lab and POS.

Effects of language in use

- In discourse, information flows. Some information is new, some is known, and this is often linguistically encoded (e.g. pronouns only for old information).
- Do L2’ers use language in the context correctly? (Like a target speaker)
### Effects of language in use
- Languages seem to be able to be split into "topic prominent" and "subject prominent" languages (perhaps simply a parameter), based on whether the subject or the topic has the most prominence in the structure of a sentence.
- Givón and "pragmatic mode" (topic-comment) vs. later "syntactic mode" (target like).
- Universal topic prominent stage? (Fuller & Gundel 1987, Givón)
  - Initial experiments weren’t very good; Jin 1994 shows that transfer seems to play the biggest role—L2 Chinese isn’t easy.
- Syntax and pragmatics orthogonal?

### Ge (Huebner 1983)
- Ge used *is(a) to mark the boundary between topic and comment. Later *is(a) disappeared and then reappeared just in the contexts in which English would have *be.
- Ge’s use of *da was sensitive to topichood (and other things) for a while until Ge landed on English-like usage.
- Grammatical form preceded correct usage in context.

### Interlanguage pragmatics
- Cultures differ on when and how speech acts (apology, refusal, etc.) are performed.
- Usually learned late, after other grammatical competence is fairly well-developed.
- Important for interpersonal relationships—avoiding the appearance of rudeness or obsequiousness.
- Transfer of cultural speech act norms seems to depend on the perception of distance between the NL and TL (noticing the difference).

### How is L2 acquisition done?
- McLaughlin: suppose mind ≈ Apple || (1MHz computer with 48K RAM).
- Conscious tasks require attention, attention takes resources. Practice makes automatic, attention-free. When under conscious control, processes are flexible, can be applied to novel situations. Once automatic, hard to suppress or alter. Fossilization.

### Input vs. intake
- Learner needs comprehensible input (something that can be analyzed in terms of knowledge already acquired) to advance.
  - Bardovi-Harlig (1995) and aspect: students with prerequisites to pluperfect in reverse order reports (simple past, reverse order reports) benefited from instruction. Others didn’t.
- Intake is input used in grammar building.
Input to intake

- **Apperception (noticing the gap)**
  - Blocked by “filters” (time pressure, mid-range frequency, motivation, …)
- **Comprehensibility (meaning or structure discernible)**
  - Foreigner talk (“simplified” sort of)

Input to intake

- **Attention (focusing on aspect of language to be learned)**
  - Negotiation for meaning (helps focus on non-native-like aspects of learner language)
- **Output (forces a structural hypothesis)**
  - Even with no real analysis you can often comprehend the gist of the conversation.
  - To say something, you need a syntax, forced choice.
  - Interactors (and to some extent observers) had advantage over non-interactors (Mackey 1999)

Input to intake

- **Doughty (1991): ESL, Meaning vs. form instruction vs. control, testing RC formation.**
  - Experimental groups: strong positive effect on ability to relativize; meaning group better on comprehension.
  - Dissociated meaning from structure—ROG got the structure and not the meaning.

Input to intake

- For intake to work (in any kind of automatic way), the data must be available. But the L1 can potentially filter out useful information.
- Infants start with but lose the ability to distinguish non-native contrasts.
- French “irregulars” cédez vs. cède.
- Phonological features, distinctions, l/r in Mandarin vs. Japanese; geminates in E→J.

Language attrition

- L1 attrition—altering L1 parameter settings?
- Null subjects: Italian speakers immersed in English will sometime produce/accept overt subjects where monolinguals would not. Broadening the contexts in which they can use overt pronouns (not forgetting how to use null subjects).