How Second Languages are Learned
An Introduction

A comprehensive introduction to how people learn second languages (L2s), this textbook approaches the topic through five problems the L2 learner has to solve: 'breaking into' the L2; associating forms with meanings; learning sentence structure; learning phrasal and sentential meaning; and learning the use of the L2 in context. These problems are linked throughout to the L2 acquisition of lexis, morphology, syntax, semantics, phonetics/phonology and language-use in a reader-friendly way, using key studies to build a comprehensive picture of how L2s are learned. ‘In a nutshell’ summaries of chapter sections provide helpful signposts to the developing argument, whilst end-of-chapter activities encourage the reader to reflect on the ideas presented, analyse data and think creatively about the problems encountered. The roles of innate knowledge, input, and the age at which learning starts are also considered. This essential textbook will enable students to think objectively about language, and will be an asset to any introductory course on second language acquisition.

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An Introduction

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For Lenny, Katherine, Isabelle and Robin
growing up in a multilingual world
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10.9 Omission of verb forms by CLIL and EFL learners (based on García Mayo and Villarreal Olaizola, 2011: 137, Table 3) 274
Second language (L2) speakers of English can be heard saying things like the following, where the native speaker equivalent is given in the right-hand column:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>L2 Speaker</th>
<th>Native Speaker</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Who want this egg?</td>
<td>Who wants this egg?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. He bring umbrella with him</td>
<td>He brought an umbrella with him</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. He wake up and shaked the girl</td>
<td>He woke up and shook the girl</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. No very good</td>
<td>It isn’t very good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Is the café is open?</td>
<td>Is the café open?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. I sink zis is yours</td>
<td>I think this is yours</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Such differences between L2 speaker speech and native speaker speech are not idiosyncratic. Many L2 learners of English go through stages of development where they allow a verb not to agree with a subject (1), omit articles where they are needed (2), do not inflect the verb appropriately for past tense (2 and 3), use no where isn’t is required (4), copy rather than move a verb in questions (5), or use substitutes for some of the more difficult sounds of English (6). Similar systematic divergence from the target language by L2 speakers is found in the learning of other languages. Patterns like these provide clues to the linguistic knowledge that underlies them – the mental grammars of L2 speakers. And patterns of linguistic behaviour that change over time provide clues to how the mental grammars of L2 speakers develop.

This book introduces the reader to a range of examples of the use of language by L2 speakers in a number of different languages and some of the hypotheses that have been made about the mental grammars that give rise to this use. The aim is to build an overall picture of what is currently known about how second languages are learned.

Because readers may be new to this area of enquiry, three strategies have been used in the text to help with the assimilation of and engagement with the facts and ideas. Firstly, ‘in a nutshell’ summaries of preceding sections appear at frequent intervals. These act as signposts to the main points being made in each section. Secondlly, end-of-chapter activities are designed to encourage active reading. These activities also aim to develop the ability to interpret data drawn from
the primary literature on second language learning and to foster creative thinking about the significance of those data. Thirdly, the concluding remarks at the end of each chapter give an overview of what the chapter has been about. Additionally, a glossary of key terms and conventions is provided at the end of the book.

There are probably more people today who learn second, third or more languages than at any time in the past. It is hoped that this book will give you an insight into how they do it.
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