IS FIRST LANGUAGE ACQUISITION LIKE SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION?

IDENTITY HYPOTHESIS

SIMILAR PROCESS WITH IMPORTANT DIFFERENCES:

• Cognitive development: identity, space, time reference...
• Brain plasticity: phonetics...
• Affective factors: identity, personality...

CONTRASTIVE HYPOTHESIS

SLA is determined by the structure of the first language.

Contrastive Analysis = There is a positive transfer of similar structures and there is a negative transfer or interference of different structures.
THREE COMPONENTS

- **PROPENSITY**

The learner must feel the need to learn the language. Propensity covers the totality of factors that induce the learner to do it, e.g. social integration, communicative needs, attitude, education & promotion...

- **LANGUAGE FACULTY**

The learner must possess the capacity for language learning, which includes the ability to discriminate among speech sounds, to analyse sound sequences and relate them to particular things, to remember these relationships ...

- **ACCESS**

The learner must have sufficient access to samples of the language. The language processor cannot operate without a) language input, and b) opportunities for communication.

THREE CATEGORIES

• THE STRUCTURE OF THE PROCESS

The learner must acquire a solid body of knowledge in several interrelated domains, e.g. phonological, morphological, syntactic, lexical knowledge. Each successive stage of learning requires the maintenance of a delicate balance among the elements of these domains. With the transition from each stage the learner must establish a new balance.

• TEMPO OF ACQUISITION

The SLA components determine the tempo of language acquisition. Different levels of propensity, cognitive development and language use opportunities result in an enormous range of tempo variation.

• END STATE

Fossilization indicates that the process of language acquisition has ceased. As a rule this happens at a point long before a complete mastery of the language.

• THE PROBLEM OF ANALYSIS
In order to learn the language the learner must analyse the stream of sounds and separate out its constituents.

• THE PROBLEM OF SYNTHESIS
In order to produce utterances that go beyond one-word sentences, the learner has to put the language constituents together.

• THE EMBEDDING PROBLEM
Utterances are generally embedded in copious contextual information. Learning a language amounts to a gradual shift in the balance of linguistic and contextual information in favour of the former.

• THE MATCHING PROBLEM
Progress in language acquisition requires the learner to match continuously his own language performance against the standards of the target language speakers.

INTERLANGUAGE

GROUP OF RULES
THAT FORM A VARIETY OF THE TARGET LANGUAGE

MAIN FEATURES:

• A COMBINATION OF RULES THAT THE LEARNER HAS ALREADY ACQUIRED, RULES THAT ARE BEING TESTED, FALSE RULES AND COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES.

• SYSTEMATICITY.

• COHERENCE.

• USE OF LEARNING AND COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES.

CENTRAL PROCESS FOR ACQUIRING A LANGUAGE

STEPS:

1. IDENTIFY A FEATURE OF THE TARGET LANGUAGE.
2. FORM A HYPOTHESIS (CRITICAL RULE).
3. TEST HYPOTHESIS FOR A CONVENIENT PERIOD OF TIME
   IN AURAL AND WRITTEN TEXT SAMPLES AND BY MEANS OF FEEDBACK IN LANGUAGE PRODUCTION.
4. ACCEPT, DELAY, CHANGE OR REJECT HYPOTHESIS.


CRITICAL RULES

CONDITIONS

• Grammar rules must become critical before they can be accepted.
• Only rules that are critical are subject to change.
• Learners require enough time to test critical rules.
• Learners need enough feedback to accept a critical rule.
• The number of critical rules that can be simultaneously tested is limited.

A MAJOR IMPLICATION FOR LANGUAGE TEACHING:
THE NEW ROLE OF GRAMMAR TEACHING IN LANGUAGE LEARNING