

Principles of Language Learning and Teaching

The seventh edition of this classic second language acquisition (SLA) text provides an overview of the theoretical foundations of language teaching.

This new edition has been updated to capture current research and practice in the field. Among concepts that are either redefined or entirely new are:

- Language learning in an era of globalization and multilingualism.
- The significance of transnationalism, identity, investment, agency, and ideology.
- Language learning as situated, usage-based, and socioculturally contextualized.
- The importance of emotional engagement, intercultural sensitivity, and self-efficacy in language learning.
- Transdisciplinary and ecological approaches as keys to language teaching in the 21st century.

The seventh edition also retains useful historical information and foundational cornerstones of SLA that teachers have found beneficial in their instruction. Key principles continue to be presented and explained with direct application to classroom language education and real-life contexts. Features such as “Points to Ponder” (questions for readers’ personal reflection), classroom connections and “Tips for Teaching,” suggested readings, and a glossary of terminology are updated in this edition. With its reader-friendly style, practical pedagogical tools, and comprehensive coverage of state-of-the-art research findings, this edition serves as an essential resource for language teacher education programs worldwide, catering to the needs of both novice and experienced language teachers.

H. Douglas Brown, Emeritus Professor of English in the MA-TESOL program, San Francisco State University, has authored articles and books on second language acquisition, language pedagogy, and language assessment, including *Principles of Language Learning and Teaching*, 6th Edition (2014); *Teaching by Principles*, 4th Edition, with Heekyeong Lee (2015); and *Language Assessment*, 3rd Edition, with Priyanvada Abeywickrama (2019). For 22 years, Professor Brown was the director of SFSU’s American Language Institute. He is a past president of TESOL and recipient of the James E. Alatis Award for Distinguished Service.

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A Course in Second Language Acquisition

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The Role of Errors in Learning

Corder (1967) emphasized the value of errors as windows into the learner's mind, showing not only what they know but how they are processing the target language. He argued that errors are a natural part of the learning process and serve as a tool for hypothesis testing. For example, a learner might initially use the verb form “goed” instead of “went,” revealing an overgeneralization of the regular past tense rule. This reflects an active cognitive process of learning the L2 system, not simply interference from the L1.

Corder (1967) proposed that learners operate with a *built-in syllabus*, meaning they follow their own internal logic and progression through language learning rather than simply responding to external instruction. This internal syllabus is shaped by their cognitive processes and the input they receive, and it can differ significantly from the structure imposed by language teachers or textbooks (Corder, 1967).



POINTS TO PONDER: In your L2 learning, to what extent have errors that you have made (either in production or comprehension) provided “windows” of insight into furthering your development?

Developmental Patterns in Learner Language

While recent research has moved away from viewing learner language development as progressing through discrete stages, understanding some general developmental patterns can be helpful for educators and researchers. Research on **interlanguage** has identified several developmental patterns that learners commonly exhibit as they acquire a second language. These patterns demonstrate that language learning is not a linear progression but a dynamic process shaped by cognitive, linguistic, and social factors (Ortega, 2009). Learners progress through different stages as they experiment with L2 structures, often exhibiting fluctuations in their accuracy and proficiency along the way.

Interlanguage development can be marked by several key processes, including simplification, overgeneralization, restructuring, and U-shaped behavior, all of which provide insight into how learners internalize and modify their understanding of the target language (Ortega, 2009).

Simplification

Simplification refers to learners' tendency to reduce the complexity of the L2 system, particularly in the early stages of development. This process allows learners to communicate despite their limited knowledge of the L2, but it often results in non-target-like forms (Ortega, 2009). For example, a learner might omit function words like articles or auxiliary verbs, producing sentences such as “She going store” instead of “She is going to the store.” In this case, the learner simplifies the verb structure by omitting the auxiliary “is,” relying on a basic subject-verb-object pattern. Simplification is particularly prevalent when learners have limited L2 knowledge and rely on basic communicative strategies to convey meaning.

Simplification is particularly prevalent in phonology and morphology. In phonological development, learners may omit or simplify consonant clusters, as in the case of a learner pronouncing “cats” as “cat.” Morphological simplification may involve dropping inflectional