

外国語習得の問題点

目 下 正 一

SECOND LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

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一つの言語しか話せず、一つの文化圏の風俗習慣しか知らない人間が、二ヶ国語が話せ二つの文化圏で生活できる人間になるためには、外国語教育だけではなく「文化教育」も受けなければならない。人が母国語を話し母国語文化圏内で適切にふるまえるようになるにも約二十年ほどの語学および文化的訓練が必要であるが、その約二十年間の内容を、個人が数年間で、特にターゲット言語圏の外で、学習することは可能であろうか。

また、外国語教育理論には、コグニティブ理論とオーディオリンガル理論という二大言語教育理論があるが、その長所と短所は何か。この二つの理論の長所を組み合わせた外国語学習プログラムを作成することは可能であろうか。

以上を考察した。

People encounter various problems in the process of learning a second (or a foreign) language. These problems are classified into three major areas: (1) purely linguistic problems; (2) the learner's psychological problems; and, (3) cultural problems.

(1) Linguistic Problems: Mastering a new phonological and syntactic system is an example. It is a trying task for a native speaker of Japanese, who has attained only five Japanese vowels, to acquire 27 English vowels (including diphthongs). It is also surprising for him or her to realize that every English sentence has a subject, when a subject is easily omitted in Japanese. The fruits of a comparative study of the two languages (the mother tongue and the target language) are often used in order to eliminate these "purely linguistic" problems.

(2) Learners' Psychological Problems: When one tries to acquire a skill or to master any given subject, whether or not one assimilates effectively

depends on the following four factors: (1) IQ; (2) aptitude; (3) motivation; and, (4) instruction.

Some educators claim that the first three elements have an 80% influence on the learner, namely, IQ - 20%, aptitude - 30%, and motivation - 30%. This indicates that a well-motivated student, mentally or vocationally, or both, will acquire or "master" a foreign language faster than an ill-motivated student. It is true that learning a foreign language is a very psychological matter. It has been reported that a person with a positive attitude toward the society where the target language is spoken learns well. The implication here is that foreign language teachers must seek for not only a better method of teaching the language but also a way to eliminate the psychological problems that the learner may have.

(3) Cultural Problems: Some foreign language teachers believe that all they must do is to teach their students how to transpose expressions in one language into expressions in another language. In this way, the students may be able to become bilingual, but such practices do not lead them to a well-balanced bilingual and bicultural state. A true bilingual person is one who can live in the culture that the language represents. One has to be bilingual in order to be bicultural, or vice versa.

In a child's first language (mother tongue) development, intellectual and linguistic developments are attained by (1) neurological development, (2) the social environment, (3) the child's experience with things, and (4) the learner's own activity. That a foreign language learner must cover the items (2)-(4) in a very short period of time after

his or her neurological and physiological developments have been already or almost completed, in order to become bilingual and bicultural, presents many and various problems.

First, a learner must deal with, cope with, and/or accept new social values that the foreign language represents. (Item #2 – the social environment)

Second, the learner must have an opportunity to experiment with things or people in the society that the foreign language represents in order to attain linguistic and intellectual advancement. (Item #3 – the individual's experience with things)

Third, and finally, the learner's own activity in the society that the language represents is crucial. The learner must apply his or her intellectual methods to complex situations, just as he or she has done to resolve the contradictions and to solve the problems in the learner's "mother" cultural environment. (Item #4 – the child's own activity)

MY PHILOSOPHY ON TEACHING AND LEARNING SECOND LANGUAGES

Let me examine the two major foreign language teaching theories: audio-lingual theory and cognitive theory.

1. Audio-lingual Teaching: The theoretical bases for audio-lingual approach come from two fields; descriptive linguistics and behavioristic psychology. Proponents of this approach aim to duplicate native language habits in the second language learner. To the audio-lingual theorist, "foreign language learning is basically a mechanical process of habit formation." As for practice, the audio-lingual approach is a combination of two techniques; (1) mimicry-memorization of set phrases and (2) pattern practice exercises. The purpose of mimicry-memorization is to have the learner master all the sounds and intonation patterns which are presented in the dialogue section. The purpose of pattern drills is to enable the learner to overlearn the structure to the point of automatic, non-thoughtful response. The typical audio-lingual textbook consists of units divided into three main sections: a dialogue, pattern practice exercises, and, some type of application activity. There are few or no gram-

matical explanations in the textbooks. The structures in the textbooks are based on a scientific, linguistic analysis of the two languages.

2. Cognitive Teaching: The theoretical bases for cognitive approach come from two fields; generative-transformational linguistics and cognitive psychology. Proponents of the cognitive approach have as their goal the developments of a "competence" in the second language learner. The means employed to achieve this goal are based on cognitive interpretations of learning. The term "cognitive" indicates a conscious acquisition of linguistic "competence". In the typical textbook, each chapter begins with a dialogue or a reading which serves to introduce the new vocabulary and the new structures to be learned in the chapter. The reading material is followed by a section stating and explaining the rules related to the grammar. No attempt is made to develop automatic, non-thoughtful responses. The goal is conscious understanding of structural usage.

I would like to make some comments on implications from the two foreign language teaching theories from the viewpoint of a language instructor who has taught English in Japan and Japanese in the United States.

A-L theory demands the teacher avoid any discussion of grammar until the structure has been overlearned. I have found, however, this is simply time-consuming. It is also extremely frustrating for the students, who have already or almost attained intellectual maturation, to be exposed to new sounds and patterns without being explained how they are articulated and constructed. A-L theory also demands that the teacher should not use the learner's mother tongue in the classroom. It may be possible to teach a native speaker of Japanese an "I have a book" construction by showing that you have a book in your hand, without any explanations on the grammatical and phonological points. But, how could the instructor teach complex patterns such as "They couldn't have played tennis if they hadn't learned how to." without using the students' mother tongue? I have found it impossible and undesirable to eliminate the mother tongue from the classroom.

Now, cognitive theory claims that since language is basically a creative activity, the learner needs to activate his or her competence in order to create the specific utterances which are needed. It, therefore, asserts that as soon as the student comprehends the underlying structure, he or she must be required to perform. I think that this idea skips the "step" element of the hop-step-jump procedure; understanding, practice, and performance. That the student understands how a given structure is constructed does not necessarily guarantee that the learner can perform. We, language instructors, often find it necessary to have our students repeat the same thing over and over again, even if it is very monotonous to both the students and to the teachers.

MY PHILOSOPHY

1. Grammatical and phonological explanations in the learner's mother tongue are essential. I believe that the acquisition of a basic competence is a prerequisite to creative language usage. A thorough understanding of each pattern should precede its application in the language skills. Before asking the students to perform, the teacher should establish the basic foundation which makes performance possible.

2. Overlearning is necessary and indispensable. It is evident that a native speaker has an unconscious and automatic control of the various elements of his or her own language. The goal of the language course is to have the learner develop the same types of abilities that the native speaker has. The students must reach the point at which they can handle the language at an unconscious level. It is obvious, from the theory and the practice, that overlearning is an indispensable element of successful language learning.

SECOND LANGUAGE CURRICULA

I have stated that most of the problems in learning a second language lie in the fact that the learner must attain linguistic fluency in a fraction of the time in which the learner acquires his or her mother tongue. It usually takes about seven

years (0 to 7 years old) to acquire a high degree of control over the phonological and syntactical systems of one's mother tongue. It takes another seven years or more to "perfect" one's linguistic ability. At the final stage, one is, presumably, able to express oneself adequately both in written and spoken forms, as well as the ability to comprehend ideas expressed in both forms.

The learner, who has been studying a second language at home or abroad, often becomes frustrated when (1) he or she assumes that the complex language acquisition process and its duration will be compressed and shortened (by some "magic" formulae and methods, perhaps) and (2) he or she feels that the progress is too slow despite the learner's assumption. It is possible for the second language learner to acquire most of the syntactical patterns and all of the phonological system and sound patterns in a relatively short period of time, if the student is studying in an intensive course environment. However, it takes a lot more time to synthesize the already acquired syntactic and phonological patterns into the stage at which the learner can express himself or herself adequately in written and spoken forms in the target culture's real life situations.

I have named the period when one acquires basic language skills "the basic language training period". I call the post basic training period "the socio-linguistic training period", during which period the learner is required to integrate the four language skills that the student has acquired in the basic training period more effectively, in order to live and express oneself in the target society. The term "socio" implies that preparations for living and expressing oneself in the target society must be made at this stage. The word "linguistic" implies advanced linguistic training. The term "linguistic" also implies that the four language skills—listening, reading, speaking and writing—at this point must be integrated so that the learner can concentrate on the "what" (the contents) of the language rather than on the "how".

Every language has its logic, so does every society. Unless one masters these two logics, one will never be able to express oneself successfully in the

target "language" in the target "society", no matter how successfully he has mastered the syntactic and phonological patterns. The English language and its related thought patterns have evolved out of the Anglo-European cultural pattern. The expected sequence of thought in English is essentially a Platonic-Aristotelian sequence. Japanese thought patterns, on the other hand, are marked by what may be called approach by indirection. In this kind of thought pattern, the development of the argument may be said to be "turning and turning in a circle". Such a development in the English language would strike the native speaker of English as awkward and unnecessarily indirect. Japanese society may be classified as a "group-oriented" society where mutual interests are honored and the social hierarchy is rather rigid. In a society like this, it is often necessary to suppress an individual's insistence or assertion, in order to express oneself successfully, adequately and fully.

CONCLUSION

The ultimate purpose of learning a foreign lan-

guage is to be able to communicate with native speakers in the target society that the target language represents. To attain this goal, both linguistic and social training are necessary. A true bilingual and bicultural person is one who can express oneself successfully and fully on the basis of two different linguistic and social logics.

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