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ABSTRACT

Foreign language instruction and related research on second language acquisition in the United States can be understood only in the context of the role of English, of American education, and of speech and language research. Any part of an educational system is both a result of historical processes and a response to current needs and values. The following five aspects of the language situation in the United States are relevant to an understanding of foreign language teaching and learning: (1) the dominance of English in American life; (2) the scarcity of foreign language instruction in the public schools; (3) the four distinct language professions (foreign language teachers, bilingual specialists, English-as-a-Second-Language teachers, and English as a native language teachers); (4) language instruction outside the public schools, and (5) myths about language held by Americans. Second language acquisition (SLA) research has tended to be tied to either linguistics or psychology, applying the theoretical models from different contexts. More complex research designs and research programs on SLA, while difficult to manage, are necessary. (MSE)

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Foreign Language Instruction and Second Language Acquisition Research in the United States

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Foreign language (FL) instruction and the related research on second language acquisition (SLA) in the United States can be understood only in the context of the role of English, of American education, and of speech and language research and educational research in the United States. Any part of an educational system is, after all, both a result of historical processes and a response to current needs and values.

THE LANGUAGE SITUATION IN THE UNITED STATES

Five aspects of the language situation are relevant to an understanding of FL teaching and learning in the United States: the dominance of English in American life, the scarcity of FL instruction in U. S. public schools, the language professions, FL instruction outside the public schools, and myths about language held by Americans.

Dominance of English

The most salient part of the language situation in the United States is surely the overall dominance of English. Not only is English by far the most common mother tongue, it is also by far the language most often learned as a second language and is overwhelmingly the language of participation in U.S. economic, political, and social life. Moreover, Americans perceive their nation as even more monolingual than it is. In 1975, for example, when the U.S. Bureau of the Census conducted a special sample survey of non-English languages, almost 18 percent of the population aged 14 years or older claimed a mother tongue other than English (seven out of ten of them native-born Americans), and one person out of eight aged four or older lived in a household in which a language other than English was spoken (Waggoner 1981). Although not the national or official language of the United States by constitution, statute, or regulation, English is the de facto national language, its status maintained by powerful social pressures, and non-English-speaking immigrant groups have generally experienced relatively rapid attrition of mother tongue competence and corresponding shift to English (Fishman et al. 1966, Veltman 1983). In spite of this pattern of linguistic assimilation, the visibility of large numbers of Hispanics and the relatively recent influx of Asians have resulted in movements advocating some kind of legal status for English, both at state and national levels. The outcome of such movements is unclear, but the dominance of English is likely to persist no matter what the outcome.

FL Instruction in the Public Schools

A complementary aspect of this English dominance is the very low incidence of FL instruction in the schools. Although education is basically a state, not a federal, responsibility and the greater part of policy making is in the hands of local school districts, the picture of language instruction in American schools is surprisingly similar from one part of the country to another. About five-eighths of secondary schools offer some FL instruction, but in 71 percent of these less than half of the students are enrolled in FL courses (Oxford and Rhodes 1988). The most common pattern is probably two years of instruction in Spanish. This lack of commitment to FL instruction in public education is unique among industrialized nations. According to many observers FL enrollments have "bottomed out" and started a slow rise. But the fact remains that American educators give small place to FL instruction and on the whole do not expect students to acquire a working competence in the language they study; the brief exposure to a foreign language serves more as an inoculation against further study than as a foundation for achieving advanced levels.

Ringing statements by national commissions and several political leaders to the effect that American competence in FLs is disgraceful and a danger for the national wellbeing have not yet led to significant changes in the pattern.

The small place for FL instruction in public education is compatible with the widespread American view that bilingualism is a handicap, a mark of inadequate control of English, and a sign of membership in an unassimilated and presumably otherwise disadvantaged minority group. The support for bilingual education symbolized by court decisions, federal legislation, and state and local programs has been won on the grounds of equality of opportunity and quicker transition to English, not on grounds of conserving the nation's FL resources (Campbell and Schnell 1987).

Not surprisingly, one of the bright spots in FL instruction and research in the United States involves the teaching of English to speakers of other languages (TESOL). Although the United States has a long history of teaching English to immigrants in the workplace and in so-called Americanization classes, the modern TESOL profession arose primarily in connection with teaching English to foreign students attending American universities and has ties with linguistics that go back to the intensive FL programs common during World War II. The TESOL profession has been an important locus of American research in second language acquisition, a fact largely responsible for the existence of a generation of American SLA specialists who do not themselves speak a second language. One can point to outstanding exceptions of Americans with extensive overseas experience or with outstanding FL specialization, but the majority of contributors to the active American scene of SLA research still belong to this English-oriented group.

One of us remembers vividly an occasion in the 1960s when he was invited to talk about SLA research to a group of university students in Sweden. He did what he was invited to do, in English of course, with the humbling awareness that no corresponding group of American graduate students could have followed and participated in such a discussion in a language other than English, whereas most of the Swedish students could do so in two or more foreign languages. Researchers do not necessarily need to have personal experience with the phenomena they want to investigate; in fact, second-language-competent SLA investigators may unconsciously assume that other learners have acquired their second language competence in more or less the same way that they have. But it is at least worth noting that many American SLA researchers have little or no FL competence while most European SLA researchers have experienced the phenomena under study.

Language Professions

Another feature of the language situation in the United States that is relevant to our understanding of the learning and teaching of FLs is the existence of four different language professions, each with its own occupational goals, education or special training, and attitudes on language education issues: FL teachers, bilingual education specialists, teachers of English as a second language, and teachers of English as a native language. These groups, who could be strong allies if they shared important aspects of their educational perspectives and saw complementary roles for themselves in the American educational system, generally see one another as adversaries or, at best, as professionally unrelated. We will not attempt here to address the relation between the study of literature and FL instruction as such—a problematic issue in most European and American educational systems.

FL Instruction outside Public Education

A considerable amount of second language learning takes place outside the FL sector of public education. Private schools tend to offer more and better FL instruction than public schools do, but they still fall within the patterns already described. The difference between FL instruction in state and private universities is not so great, but private universities seem to have taken the lead in the reintroduction of language requirements for entrance and graduation. Outside the educational system are the numerous commercial language schools, training programs of corporate enterprises (either internationally oriented or with non-English-speaking employees), and the SLA that takes place under nontutored, "natural" conditions in the United States and by Americans abroad or in FL communities at home. "Ethnic" schools have been surveyed (cf. Fishman 1980), but commercial schools and corporate training programs have not been much investigated, and information on their various types of FL instruction would be needed to understand the full range of FL learning in the United States. Untutored SLA has in recent years become the focus of valuable research in the United States and Europe, although the exact relation of its findings to FL instruction in formal educational settings is still to be clarified.

Myths about Language

Finally, let us emphasize an aspect of the language situation that is not often treated explicitly: attitudes and beliefs about language widely held by Americans. We assume that the members of any speech community, even such a large and complex one as the United States, share to a considerable degree a set of such attitudes and beliefs, so-called myths about language (Ferguson and Heath 1981:xxvii-xxx). We assume further that these myths may sometimes be of critical importance for understanding the activities of FL learning and teaching as well as the SLA research efforts of the community These myths vary considerably by region, social class,

and other categories, and they have not been investigated as much as the evaluative attitudes toward languages and their speakers (cf. Ryan & Giles 1982). Some of them, however, merit notice.

First, Americans tend to regard competence in an FL as a kind of all-or-none personal attribute not particularly related to the process of acquisition or the nature and level of proficiency. People have the competence or they don't: "Does so-and-so speak Chinese?" "I don't know Spanish." Americans generally assume (with some justification, of course) that there is little connection between having studied a language and "knowing" it or being able to use it. The research corrective to this myth is the current concern with proficiency testing and other forms of measurement of language competence. Richard Lambert has called for a "common metric measuring in an objective, consistent fashion the degree of proficiency a person. . .has in a foreign language." (Lambert 1987:13)

Related to this failure to connect the processes of acquisition to the level of competence is the notion that there are only a few "real"—one might almost say "magical"—ways to learn a language. Many people have assured us at one time or another that the only way to learn a foreign language is to be exposed to it in childhood, or to live in a country where it is spoken, or (usually said with a smile) to have a mate or lover who speaks the language. The widespread belief that living in the appropriate country will produce fluency in a language is evidenced, for example, in the disappointment that many Stanford undergraduate students feel after one or two quarters at a Stanford overseas campus, when they find that they have not automatically reached full fluency. American students typically do not expect to learn to use a language by studying it in school (and neither do their teachers or the surrounding community), but they do expect to learn it by being in the country, having no inkling of the time, effort, and communicative strategies required. When Americans are faced with a need to acquire some FL competence and the options just discussed are not available, they want the fastest, most efficient, most painless method, preferably one that features some new technology. The research counterpart to this view is the perennial concern to test different "methods" to see which one is best, that is, most efficient.

A third myth concerns the way people differ in their ability to learn languages. Americans believe that aptitude is very important. Although many assume that their compatriots in general have low language aptitude, they assume just as strongly or more so that individuals differ greatly in language aptitude. Many individual Americans claim that they themselves have no aptitude for languages and could never learn one, whereas some people they know are, as they say, "good at languages." Several first-rate American universities make provision to waive their language requirement if a test shows that a particular student has poor language aptitude.

In this connection, it is interesting to compare attitudes toward foreign competence in English with those toward American competence in FLs. An American's lack of competence in an FL is often attributed to low aptitude. In contrast, a foreigner's lack of competence in English may be attributed to lack of opportunity, clannishness, laziness, or other explanatory factors, but rarely to lack of aptitude. Incidentally, an attitude not often verbalized but apparent from incidental comments and behavior is that a foreigner with an excellent command of English is somehow more intelligent and more competent in other ways than one whose command of English is less good.

In addition to the emphasis on aptitude, Americans hold conventionalized notions, almost stereotypes, about the relative difficulty of languages. They assume that there is some kind of absolute scale of difficulty such that Spanish is easier to study or to learn than French, or a more nuanced scale such that Spanish is easier in the first year but harder in the second year. This view contrasts with the implicit assumption of most American linguists that all languages are roughly equal in difficulty for the newborn and differences in difficulty in SLA, if they exist, are due to the nature of the structural differences between L1 and L2 (shades of contrastive analysis!). Linguistic theories that make allowance for measurement along these lines, such as those involving markedness or parameter-setting, could contribute to the understanding of these questions.

RESEARCH ON SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

On the theory side, SLA research in the United States has tended to be tied either to linguistics or to psychology, and the tendency has often been to "apply" a theoretical model derived from quite different contexts of language use rather than to deal with SLA phenomena as the source for theory construction. Interestingly, the USSR (and prerevolutionary Russia) has had the same pattern of theory application from linguistics and psychology (Pitthan 1988) and has experienced the same failure to construct theories that start from SLA, although the patterns of teaching and learning FLs in the Soviet Union are dramatically different from those in the United States.

Research Paradigms

Over the past decade and a half, research on second language acquisition has burgeoned to the point where even a brief lay-of-the-land discussion becomes a formidable task. A cursory review of several recent textbooks in the field reveals numerous approaches that have variously been labeled "theories," "models," or "hypotheses" of SLA. The acculturation model or pidginization hypothesis and the monitor model are listed by Gardner (1985), Ellis (1985a), Klein (1986) and McLaughlin (1987). Ellis and McLaughlin list the universal hypothesis, which seems to be similar to Klein's identity

hypothesis. In addition, Ellis includes accommodation theory, discourse theory, a variable competence model, and a neurofunctional model. McLaughlin covers what he calls cognitive theory, while in Klein we also find contrastive analysis and learner varieties, which seems akin to what others have referred to as "interlanguage studies" (cf. Long and Sato 1984). Gardner's review of models from social psychology includes Carroll's conscious reinforcement model, Bialystok's strategy model, Lambert's social psychological model, Clement's social context model, and Giles and Byrnes' intergroup model, as well as his own socio-educational model. Yet to date, there exists no comprehensive theory that captures all of the various contexts of occurrence and products and processes that have traditionally been the domains of different "parent" disciplines. At the same time, while the most immediate goal of SLA research is perhaps to understand better those products and processes and the effects of context on them, implicit in all of the research are sometimes divergent long-term goals as well: to contribute to the disciplinary bases through a greater understanding of broader issues of the nature of language and learning and, in the more "applied" sense, to facilitate the language learning process itself.

This pluralism in SLA theory has been viewed unfavorably in the field. Researchers seem to feel more and more that the emergence of a single dominant SLA paradigm would signal the maturation of the field as a discipline (cf. Rutherford 1984, Long 1985, Gregg to appear, and others). This view can probably be traced to Kuhn's (1962) work, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, in which the social sciences are presented as being in a pretheoretical state because, unlike the "mature" hard sciences, they do not share an implicit and pervasive commitment to a single set of assumptions about questions, topics, research sites, units of analysis, and methods of observation and analysis.

While recognizing the need for theory building, we tend to side with Shulman, who has recently pointed out that Kuhn erred (and we might add SLA is in danger of erring) in "diagnosing this characteristic of the social sciences as a developmental disability" (1986:4). He cites the philosopher of science Feyerabend, who says:

> You can be a good empiricist only if you are prepared to work with many alternative theories rather than with a single point of view and "experience." This plurality of theories must not be regarded as a preliminary stage of knowledge which will at some time in the future be replaced by the One True Theory. (1970:14)

We do not mean to say that research on SLA should not be theory driven. But Shulman raises an important caveat against the potential trivialization of the field by a single paradigmatic view. While theory drives much of research (some would say it should drive all research), there are many kinds of theory that need to be taken into account in SLA.

The name of the field of inquiry itself suggests need for both a theory of language and a theory of learning. Given the current state of linguistic theory in the United States, one can find any number of competence and performance models. The same could be said of learning theory, although any theory of learning would necessarily include some specification of an initial state, a motivation to learn, a specification of input, an acquisition procedure, and a description of a desired state. In addition, researchers who deal in tutored contexts need a model of teaching. Closely related to all of these areas is a theory of research design. In the following sections, we review some research on learning contexts, on the nature of language, on the acquisition process, and on teaching behaviors believed to facilitate learning.

Learning Contexts

Several taxonomies for the contexts of teaching and learning second languages are common in the literature. One involves the labels assigned to teaching methodology. Some years ago, researchers hoped that a comparison of "methods" would lead to an optimal one for language learning. That kind of research, which takes method as the unit of analysis, has proven not very fruitful. Several authors (Brumfit 1988, Larsen-Freeman 1988, Long 1988) critique this line of research; we will not review their arguments here.

Other taxonomic distinctions, however, persist in contemporary research. One is that between tutored and untutored language learning. Another divides the second language learning field into second language, foreign language, and bilingual education. Both distinctions implicitly reflect differences in degree, if not in kind, of the processes and products under investigation. While not disparaging the practical worth of these taxonomies, they are useful only so long as the contextual features used to form the bases of the taxonomies differ significantly across categories and are sufficiently uniform within them.

One danger is that these taxonomic distinctions may obfuscate both cultural and individual differences. For example, DeKeyser's (1986) description of the learning strategies of a group of American students in a one-semester study abroad course in Spain will ring familiar to anyone who has had experience with American students in similar programs, regardless of the host country. At the same time, individual differences within the group were striking, even though they were in the same FL program.

Within the North American context, research on these issues has tended to concentrate north of the U.S.-Canada border. In his review of social psychology and SLA, Gardner argues that, among the various individual differences examined in the SLA literature, an integrative motive (broadly defined) and "language aptitude are the only two individual differences which have been well documented to date as being implicated in the language

learning process" (1985:83). He argues further that changes in social attitudes may be affected by second language learning experiences and that these changes are perhaps greatest when programs involve novel experiences of rather short duration, such as intensive bicultural experiences among students who maximize contacts with native speakers or in short intensive programs.

From this perspective, if parents and community play a role in socialization and the formation of attitudes, they also influence the SLA process. Gardner states:

> Second language acquisition takes place in a particular cultural context. . . [T]he beliefs in the community concerning the importance and meaningfulness of learning the language, the nature of the skill development expected, and the particular role of various individual differences in the language learning process will affect second language acquisition. (1985:146)

To the extent that Americans hold various "myths about language," researchers would want to know what communities expect of foreign language classrooms, what Americans perceive as "good" in foreign languages, and how these expectations become institutionalized. These attitudes would have important implications for language policy. Yet to date, most models of SLA emerging in the United States have tended to overlook individual and contextual differences in favor of other questions.

Formal theories of language: Studies that focus on the nature of language include those within formalist syntactic frameworks, such as Chomsky's government-binding (GB)(1981), Perlmutter's (1983) relational grammar, Bresnan's (1982) Lexical-Functional Grammar, and Gazdar et al.'s (1985) Generalized Phrase Structure Grammar. Not all of these claim to have implications for acquisition. For example, Gazdar et al. state with reference to Generalized Phrase Structure Grammar,

> In view of the fact that the packaging and public relations of much recent linguistic theory involves constant reference to questions of psychology, particularly in association with language acquisition, it is appropriate for us to make a few remarks about the connections between the claims we make and issues in the psychology of language. We make no claims, naturally enough, that our grammatical theory is *eo ipso* a psychological theory. Our grammar of English is not a theory of how speakers think up things to say and put them into words. Our general linguistic theory is not a theory of how a child abstracts from the surrounding hubbub of linguistic and nonlinguistic noises enough evidence to gain a mental grasp of the structure of a natural language. Nor is it a biological theory of the structure of an as-yet-unidentified mental organ. It is irresponsible to claim otherwise for theories of this general sort. (1985:5)

Other theories, such as Lexical Functional Grammar (LFG), have not yet been applied to SLA, although Pinker's work (1984) within an LFG framework on first language acquisition portends that it will. Rosen (1987) explores the implications between Relational Grammar and SLA. While Newmeyer (1987) points out that many of the assumptions of these frameworks are converging, the bulk of the work on SLA within formal theories of grammar reflects a strong commitment to government-binding, and has focused solely on linguistic aspects of initial and final state. A clear articulation of this position is found in Gregg (to appear).

The argument about SLA theory seems to be as follows. Since they don't have a complete theory of language, researchers can't look at language acquisition. Instead they should look at the acquisition of linguistic or grammatical competence (the terms are used interchangeably throughout our paper). Grammatical competence is defined as our intuitive knowledge of the syntax, phonology, and to some extent semantics of the language in question. One assumption within this framework is that grammatical competence is independent of language use and involves a mental system that is quite separate from pragmatic knowledge, conceptual knowledge, perception, and other human faculties. This has been called the autonomous nature of grammar. At the same time, one sense in which language is perceived to be modular is that its use results from the interaction of linguistic competence with other mental faculties or modules, involving, for example, pragmatic knowledge, conceptual knowledge, and perception.

Gregg's rather strong position is that SLA should be centrally concerned with the acquisition of linguistic competence. In addition to providing a sense of direction to the field of SLA, such an orientation would bring other advantages to the field, he maintains: a "rigor" inherent in formal approaches and a knowledge of what is innate in language and what is acquired.

These apparent advantages can also be seen as problematic areas for formal approaches as well. To date, agreement on the relevant parameters and their levels of expansion is far from universal. For example, working within a GB framework, Huang (1982) and Koopman (1984) offer differing explanations for head direction in Chinese, which, as has been pointed out in the literature (Eubank 1988; Bley-Vroman and Chaudron 1987; Klein 1987), have different effects on the interpretation of SLA data.

A second problem involves the tapping of a learner's intuitions about a second language. Coppieters (1987) argues that the linguistic competence of even very fluent second language speakers differs in unexpected ways from that of native speakers. Furthermore, Birdsong (1988) points out that, while such research intends to describe the learner's grammatical competence at any given point in time as evidenced by intuitions about the second language, the interaction of multiple cognitive mechanisms (modularity) makes it difficult to base judgments about underlying linguistic competence

on performance data such as imitation tasks.

A final problem to which formalist theories have given little attention is the process of acquisition, either in the sense of accounting for how a learner is "driven" from one stage of knowledge to another, or in the sense of providing a theory of the actual time course of acquisition. As Marshall (1979) points out and Berwick and Weinberg (1986) reiterate, "No one has seriously attempted to specify a mechanism that 'drives' language acquisition through its 'stages' or along its continuous function" (Marshall 1979:443). That is, it is not always clear what the learning process includes, how learners' linguistic competence changes from time 1 to time 2. For example, in distinguishing between the acquisition of linguistic competence and communicative competence, Gregg writes of his own experiences:

> Japanese is a pro-drop language, and knowing that, I drop pronouns left and right — including at times when a native speaker would not. That is to say that I don't yet know the discourse restraints (at least) on pronoun-dropping in Japanese, and thus my "communicative competence" is not up to native standards. (to appear: 34-35)

Apparently, this model views the acquisition of linguistic competence as instantaneous. Variation is a matter of pragmatic competence, clearly out of the realm of legitimate inquiry for those interested in the acquisition of syntax.

Functionalist approaches to language: While formalist approaches to SLA are primarily concerned with the learner's state of grammatical competence, as exemplified through intuitive judgments of grammaticality, other researchers have focused more on the process of acquisition (that is, moving from one state to another) as revealed through the system, variability, and change in the learner's production and comprehension. At the risk of oversimplifying, we might call much of this research "functionalist."

As an approach to the study of language, functionalism traces its roots to European scholars. In the United States it does not represent a single unified theory so much as an emerging school of thought that defines beginning assumptions, proper goals, and interpretive conceptions for investigations. Nor is it in principle, as Kuno (1987:1) points out, in conflict with current formal models of grammar such as government-binding. However, some beginning assumptions of this approach do part ways with those of most formal theories in important respects, and these differences have implications for the ways research is conducted.

While most functionalists recognize language as a biological system, in this view, the innate capacities that account for language ability are not necessarily domain-specific (autonomous). A commonly held goal within this research program is to uncover more general universal cognitive abilities which underlie language use and acquisition. Grammar is seen as a solution to the problem of mapping nonlinear representations on a linear channel.

Following from that view of grammar, most functionalist approaches object to the formal separation of morphosyntax (or grammar) from semantics and pragmatics. The common view is that all aspects of language, including acquisition, are driven by communicative need. MacWhinney, Bates, and Kliegl (1984) write: "The forms of natural languages are created, governed, constrained, acquired, and used in the service of communicative functions."

From this perspective, any explanation of linguistic phenomena cannot exclude semantic and pragmatic considerations. Silva-Corvalán makes this claim most explicit in her discussion of Muysken's (1981) hierarchy of markedness for tense as applied to data on language attrition: "In my view of language as a system of human communication, to be explanatory, a markedness hierarchy needs to be justified with reference to factors which lie outside the linguistic system, namely cognitive and interactional factors" (1987:14).

These assumptions have implications for what is deemed legitimate terrain for second language acquisition research. Rather than an overriding concern with abstract formulations of linguistic competence, SLA researchers working, either explicitly or implicitly, within this framework have been concerned with the production of discourse rather than clause length phenomena (e.g. Hatch 1978, Tomlin 1984), with intra-speaker variation (e.g. Tarone 1984, Ellis 1985b), with changes over time as exemplified by learner production of naturally occurring speech (e.g. Huebner 1983, Sato 1985), with the nature of linguistic input (e.g. Chaudron 1985), and with strategies employed for comprehension and production (Faerch and Kasper 1987, Chamot et al. 1988).

This more general approach also has its problems. Its emphasis on language in use has often resulted in a failure to tap the full range of what a learner "knows" about the language being acquired. In addition, often research of this type has not clearly articulated the relationship between aspects of language use and acquisition of specific features of a given linguistic system. Finally, as Gregg (to appear) justifiably points out, it has often failed to distinguish between what learners do because they are not fully proficient in the target language and what they do by virtue of being human.

Given the current state of affairs of all linguistic theories, the prospects are as promising for SLA to contribute to them as vice versa. While one finds numerous claims that SLA is in fact doing so, to date the research in this field has been more of a confirmatory nature (cf. Huebner 1987).

Models of Learning

Another large body of SLA research on the Ameri-

can scene has focused on the learning and teaching of second languages. Work in social psychology, such as Gardner's (1985) and Giles and Byrne's (1982), looks at motivation and larger social variables in second language learning; other research has drawn heavily on interactional models of discourse to isolate those features of interaction that presumably facilitate learning. The most comprehensive published review is Chaudron's *Second Language Classrooms: Research on Teaching and Learning* (1988). Here we highlight some conclusions that can be drawn from it. First, while correlations can be found between, for example,

1. modifications in teacher talk and in-class versus out-of-class interaction
2. input generation and proficiency
3. task type and type or amount of interaction
4. amount of teacher talk and language proficiency of learners
5. learner production and achievement test scores
6. learners' negotiation behaviors and proficiency,

there is little study of the causal relationship between the members of these pairs. Second, the vast majority of the studies cited in Chaudron, and presumably the bulk of the research in this area, look at English as a second language classrooms. Few studies focus on the range of teacher and student behaviors and interaction patterns in FL classes in the United States. Third, the bulk of the studies cited in Chaudron are of the process-product, or more accurately the pseudo-process-product, variety. Very few classroom-centered qualitative studies of SLA, and virtually none of FL acquisition, exist.

Finally, there are few studies that take a programmatic look at instructional programs, especially with respect to FL teaching and learning in the United States. For example, most university-level FL programs offer courses such as "Advanced Conversation" and "Grammar Review," which are usually offered to students at specific junctures in their language learning careers. Yet little research of which we are aware carefully examines either instructional goals and outcomes in these "specialized" language courses or the assumptions about FL learning that motivate their inclusion at those junctures.

CONCLUSIONS

We have tried to present a picture of the context of SLA research in the United States, and to outline broadly and critique briefly some of the major research trends in the field today within that context. What emerges is a complex picture of the acquisition process, as seen by researchers from various persuasions. To deal with this complex phenomenon, Huebner (1987) has called for the emergence of more complex research designs and research programs in SLA that include experiment and ethnography, quantitative and case studies. Such approaches carry with them the serious danger of disintegrating into utter chaos without a careful articulation of the questions asked and the types of knowledge produced. The alternative, however, would be to reduce the richness of the field to "nothing more than the atomism of a multiple variable design" (Shulman 1985), and that, in our view, would be even worse.

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