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UNIT WIN  
FELLOWSHIP

# Second Language Acquisition

**Lecture 1:** Introduction to Second Language Acquisition

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# INTRODUCTION

## AIM OF THE COURSE

- understand the underlying concepts of SLA
- explain the theory of SLA
- identify the roles of first, second, and third languages to one's language learning and development
- explain the various approaches to language teaching by considering diverse type of students
- analyze the differences method for SLA research
- formulate the roles of input, process, and output related to SLA
- distinguish the different influence of various factors to someone's language acquisition and or learning journey

## WEEK 1 – LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. The Study of Second Language Acquisition (SLA)
2. Definitions
3. The Nature of Language
  - a. Sound Systems
  - b. Syntax
  - c. Morphology and The Lexicon
  - d. Semantics
  - e. Pragmatics
4. The Nature of Nonnative Speaker Knowledge
5. Conclusion



# 01

## The Study of SLA

Is it a young field? What does it cover?  
What is SLA goal?

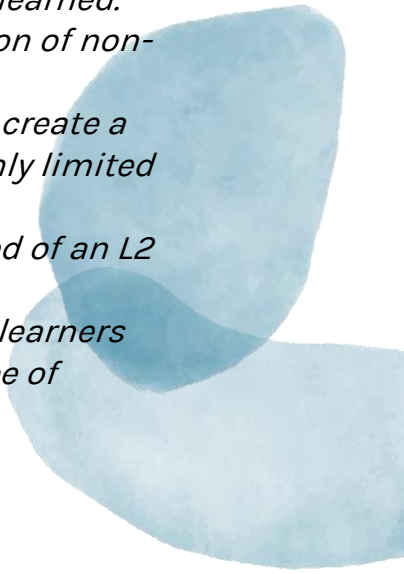


# 1. The Study of SLA

## 1. SLA is a relatively young field.

*It has expanded and developed significantly in the past 40-45 years.*

## 2. What is the scope of SLA? What does the study of SLA consist of?

- *It is the study of how L2s are learned.*
  - *It's the study of the acquisition of non-primary language.*
  - *It's the study of how learners create a new language system with only limited exposure to an L2.*
  - *It's the study of what's learned of an L2 and what's not learned.*
  - *It's the study of why most L2 learners don't achieve the same degree of knowledge and proficiency.*
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# 1. The Study of SLA

3. SLA is also concerned with the nature of the hypotheses.

4. The study of how L2s are learned is part of the broader study of language and language behavior.

- *It has larger goal which is the study of the nature of the human mind.*
- *A major goal of SLA research is the determination of linguistics constraints on the formation of L2 grammars.*

5. SLA attempts to understand the process underlying the learning of an L2.





# 02

## Definitions

Native Language, Target Language, Second Language Acquisition, Foreign Language Learning

## 2. Definitions



### Native Language (NL)

- The 1<sup>st</sup> language a child learns.
- The primary language/mother tongue/L1
- Abbreviated as NL.



### Target Language (TL)

The language being learned.



### Foreign Language Learning

- The learning of a nonnative language in the environment of one's native language.
- Example: French speakers learning English in France

## 2. Definitions



### SLA

- The common term used for the name of the discipline.
- The process of learning another language after the native language has been learned. → L2 or L3 or L4
- Important aspect: learning of nonnative language *after* the learning of native language.
- Second language → L2
- L2 → any language learned after L1
- The learning of nonnative language in the environment in which that language is spoken.
- Example: German speakers learning Japanese in Japan.
- This may or may not take place in a classroom setting.



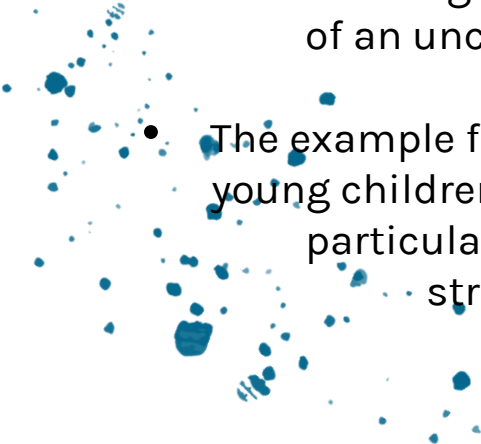
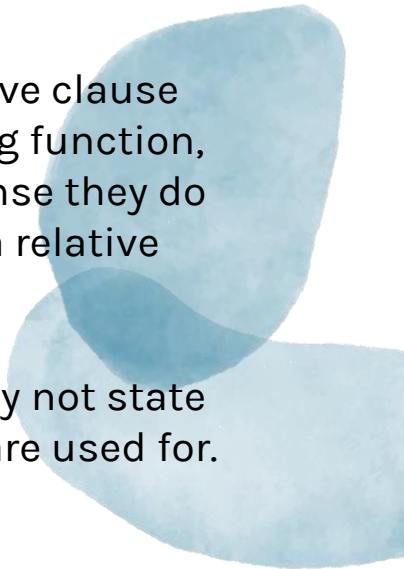
# 03

## The Nature of Language

Brief Explanation, Sound Systems, Syntax,  
Morphology and The Lexicon, Semantics,  
Pragmatics



## 3. The Nature of Language

- All normal humans acquire a language in the first few years of life.
  - The knowledge acquired is largely of an unconscious sort.
  - The example for this is when very young children learn how to form particular grammatical structures.
  - Example: the formation of relative clause.
  - They learn that relative clause often have a modifying function, but in a conscious sense they do not know that it is a relative clause.
  - They could presumably not state what relative clauses are used for.
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### 3. The Nature of Language

- A child can utter this fully formed sentence, which includes a relative clause.

- But the child is not able to articulate the function of relative clause (either this one, or relative clause in general).

**I want that toy that that boy is playing with.**

- The child is also not able to easily divide this sentence into its component parts.

- It is in this sense that the complex knowledge we have about our native language is largely unconscious.

# 3.1. The Nature of Language – *Sound Systems*

- Knowledge of the sound system → phonology.
- Phonology of our native language is complex. Minimally, it entails knowing what sounds are possible and what sounds are not possible in the language.
- Example: A native English speaker can tell the first vowel sound in the name *Goethe* [æ] is **not** a sound in English.

- Phonological knowledge is also knowing what happens not only to words in slow speech but also to a fast one.
  - Example:

**I AM GOING TO WRITE A  
LETTER**

# 3.1. The Nature of Language – *Sound Systems*

- That person, assuming a U.S. English speaker, would undoubtedly say something like the following:

**I'M GONNA WRIDA  
LEDER.**

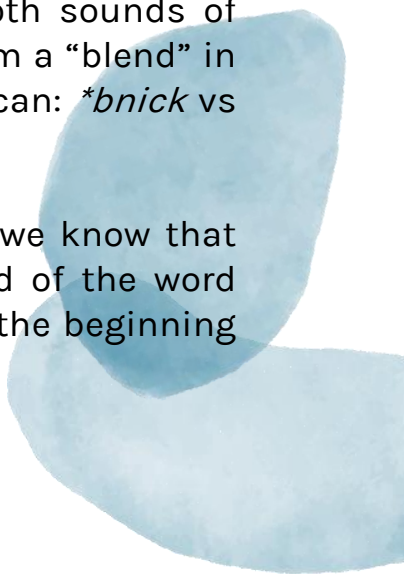

**I AM GOING TO  
WRITE A LETTER**

- Consider the following exchange:

Tom: What are you gonna do?  
Sally: I'm gonna wriDa leDer.  
Tom: You're gonna do what?  
Sally: I'm gonna wriDa leDer.  
Tom: What? I can't hear you.  
Sally: I'm going to write a letter  
*[articulated slowly and clearly]*



## 3.1. The Nature of Language – *Sound Systems*

- We can see that speakers know when to combine sounds and when not to.
  - We know that in “normal, fast” speech we combine words, but that in clearer, more articulated speech we do not.
  - In addition to knowing what are possible and impossible sounds, we also know what are possible combinations of sounds and what sounds are found in what parts of words.
  - We know, for example, that in English, while [b] and [n] are both sounds of English, they cannot form a “blend” in the way that [b] and [r] can: *\*bnick* vs *brain*.
  - Another example: while we know that [ŋ] can occur at the end of the word *ping*, it cannot do so in the beginning of English words.
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## 3.2. The Nature of Language – *Syntax*

- It is about what speakers know about the syntax of their language.
- Syntax → what's frequently known as grammar, referring primarily to the knowledge we have of the order of elements in a sentence.
- There are two kinds of grammar: (a) prescriptive grammar and (b) descriptive grammar.
- Prescriptive grammar: rules taught in school, often without regard to the way native speakers of a language actually use it.
- Example:
  - ✓ Don't end a sentence with a preposition
  - ✓ Don't split infinitives
  - ✓ Don't begin a sentence with a conjunction
  - ✓ Don't use contractions in writing

## 3.2. The Nature of Language – *Syntax*

- Descriptive grammars: describing languages as they are actually used; talking about knowledge of syntax.
- Native speakers know which are possible sentences of their languages and which are not.
- Example:
  - a. The big book is on the brown table.
  - b. The woman whom I met yesterday is reading the same book that I read last night.
  - c. The book big brown table the on is.
  - d. Women the met I yesterday whom book same the is reading read I last night that.
- We know **a and b** are **possible** English sentences, whereas **c and d** are **not**.

## 3.2. The Nature of Language – *Syntax*

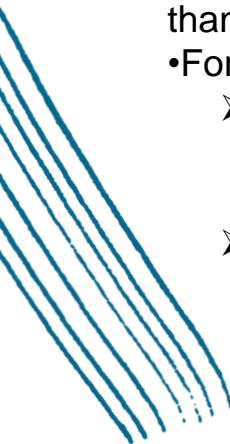
- Example:
  - a. Tom was hit by a car.
  - b. A car hit Tom.
- Some say both sentences can be assumed to be paraphrases of one another.
- Some say they have slightly different functions in English.
- If someone asks, *What did that car hit?*, the most likely answer would be *It hit Tom* rather than *Tom was hit by it*.
- Native speakers know not only what is equivalent to what, but also when to use different grammatical patterns.

## 3.2. The Nature of Language – *Syntax*

- Example:
    - a. Yesterday Sally saw June.
    - b. Sally saw June yesterday.
  - Another aspect of language is how meaning is affected by moving elements within a sentence.
  - Adv can be moved in a sentence without affecting the meaning, whereas noun cannot.
- Example:
    - a. Yesterday Sally saw Jane.
    - b. Yesterday Jane saw Sally.
  - Knowing a language entails knowing a set of rules with which we can produce an infinite set of sentences.



## 3.3. The Nature of Language – *Morphology and the Lexicon*

- The study of morphology is the study of word formation.
  - In many cases, words are made up of more than one part.
  - For example: the word UNFORESEEN.
    - Made up of 3 parts: *un* (negative function), *fore* (earlier in time), *seen* (visualized).
    - Each part is referred to as a morpheme (the minimal unit of meaning).
  - There are two classes of morphemes: **bound** and **free**.
  - **A bound morpheme:** one that can never be a word by itself. E.g. *Un* of *unlikely*.
  - **A free morpheme:** one that is a word in and of itself. E.g. *man*, *woman*, *book*, or *table*.
- 

# 3.3. The Nature of Language – *Morphology and the Lexicon*

• Words can be created by adding morphemes.

• Examples:

- establish
- establish + ment
- dis + establish + ment
- dis + establish + ment + ari + an + ism

• Not only do we know how to form words using affixes (prefixes, suffixes, infixes), but we also know what words can go with other words.


• For example:

- Mt. Everest is a high mountain.
- ~~The Empire State Building is a high building.~~ (*incorrect*)



## 3.4. The Nature of Language – *Semantics*



- It refers to the study of meaning.
  - It does not necessarily correspond to grammaticality because many ungrammatical sentences are meaningful, or at least interpretable.
  - Examples:
    - That woman beautiful is my mother.
    - I'll happy if I can get your paper.
  - These and many other sentences that are uttered by nonnative speakers of a language are perfectly comprehensible, although they do not follow the “rules” of English.
- 




## 3.4. The Nature of Language – *Semantics*



•The reverse side of the picture is the sentence that is **grammatically formed** but that, because of the content, is **meaningless**.

•Examples:

➤ That bachelor is married.

- Referential meanings are clearly not the only way of expressing meaning.
  - The way we combine elements in sentences affects their meaning.
  - Example:
    - The man bit the dog.
    - The dog bit the man.
  - The sentences above are different in meaning. Thus, we understand that syntax and meaning **interrelate**.
- 

## 3.5. The Nature of Language – *Pragmatics*

- Pragmatics deals with the way in which we use language in context.
- Example: when we answer the telephone and someone says *Is John there?*, we understand that this is a request to speak with John.
- It would be strange to respond *yes* with the caller saying *thank you* and then hanging up unless the caller did not want to carry on the conversation with John present.
- Clearly, the phrase *Is X there?* In the context of telephone usage is **a request to speak with someone** not an information question.

## 3.5. The Nature of Language – *Pragmatics*

• Word order, as discussed earlier, may have an effect on meaning in some grammatical contexts, but in others it does not.

• Example:

Child : I want a raspberry and vanilla cone.

Shopkeeper: OK, one vanilla and raspberry cone coming up.

Child : No, I want a raspberry and vanilla cone.

Shopkeeper: That's what I'm getting you.

- The conversation shows that the child is using word order to reflect the ordering of scoops of ice cream; the shopkeeper is not.
- Thus, what we have learned as adult native speakers of a language is the function of word order in the language.



# 04

## The Nature of Nonnative Speaker Knowledge

Interlanguage; Fossilization; Stabilization

# 4. The Nature of Nonnative Speaker Knowledge

- We have briefly characterized some areas of language knowledge that a native speaker has of a language.
- Knowing a second language well means knowing information similar to that of a native speaker of a language.
- Given the complexity of the knowledge that must be learned, it should be clear that the study of acquisition of that knowledge is a highly complex field.

# 4. The Nature of Nonnative Speaker Knowledge

The basic assumptions in SLA research:

- Learners create a language system, known as an **interlanguage (IL)**.
- This concept validates learners' speech, not as a deficit system, that is, a language filled with random errors, but as a **system of its own with its own structure**.
- This system is composed of numerous elements, not the least of which are elements from the NL and TL.
- There are also elements in the IL that do not have their origin in either the NL or the TL.
- These latter are called *new forms* and are the empirical essence of interlanguage.

# 4. The Nature of Nonnative Speaker Knowledge

- Central to the concept of interlanguage is the concept of **fossilization** → the cessation of learning.
- In other words, fossilization of a linguistic form, feature, rule, and so far, means they are being **permanently established** in the interlanguage of an L2 learner in a **deviant form** and they **continue to appear** in performance regardless of further exposure to the TL.
- It appears to be the case that fossilized or stabilized interlanguages exist no matter what learners do in terms of further exposure to the TL.

# 4. The Nature of Nonnative Speaker Knowledge

- Some say it's more appropriate to refer to stabilization of linguistic forms, rather than fossilization or permanent cessation on learning.
- In SLA, one often notes that learners reach plateaus that are far from TL norms.
- It appears to be the case that fossilized or stabilized interlanguages exist no matter what learners do in terms of further exposure to the TL.
- Unfortunately, a solid explanation of permanent or temporary learning plateaus is lacking at present due, part, to the lack of longitudinal studies regarding “getting stuck” in another language.

The background is a white canvas decorated with various blue watercolor elements. There are several large, soft-edged blue washes in shades of light and medium blue. Interspersed among these are numerous small, dark blue dots and splatters of varying sizes. A prominent feature is a series of parallel, slightly curved blue lines that resemble a brushstroke or a stylized object, located in the upper right quadrant. The overall aesthetic is clean, artistic, and modern.

**05**

**Conclusion**

# 5. Conclusion

- In this first lecture we have presented a series of basic definitions to help the reader begin the journey of the study of SLA.
- As has been seen, inherent in an analysis of IL data is a focus on the learner and on the process involved in learning.
- In the following lectures we present additional information about IL, beginning with a discussion of ways of analyzing L2 data.



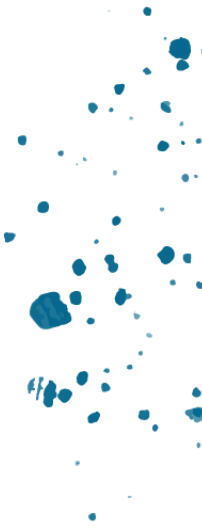
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## Comprehension Check

State whether the following statements are true or false, to check your understanding on Lecture 1 Material

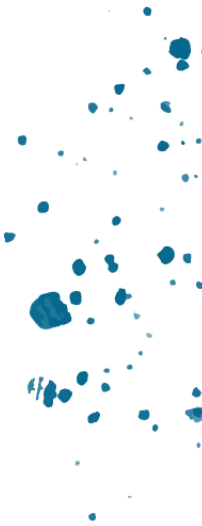


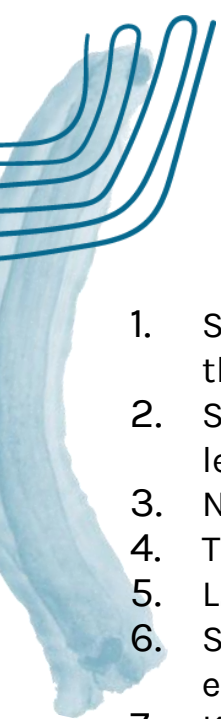
# True or False?

1. SLA is the study of how L2s are learned and the study of the acquisition of non-primary language.
  2. SLA attempts to understand the process underlying the learning of an L2.
  3. Native Language (NL) is the 2nd language a child learns.
  4. The language being learned is named Target Proficiency.
  5. L2 refers to the second language a person learns only.
  6. SLA refers to the learning of nonnative language in the environment in which that language is spoken.
  7. Knowing what sounds possible and what sounds are not possible in the language is called phonetics.
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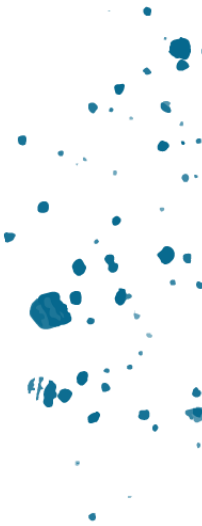



# True or False?

8. The knowledge we have of the order of elements in a sentence is syntax.
  9. Word formation is study under the scope of morpheme.
  10. Semantics deals with the study of meaning.
  11. Understanding the right context in using language is studied under the scope of pragmatics.
  12. Interlanguage refers the language system learners create that is composed of numerous elements from both NL and TL.
  13. The cessation of learning is what SLA refers to fossilization.
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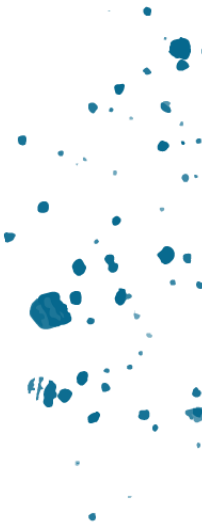


## True or False? *Answer Key*

1. SLA is the study of how L2s are learned and the study of the acquisition of non-primary language. **1. T**
  2. SLA attempts to understand the process underlying the learning of an L2. **2. T**
  3. Native Language (NL) is the 2nd language a child learns. **3. F**
  4. The language being learned is named Target Proficiency. **4. F**
  5. L2 refers to the second language a person learns only. **5. F**
  6. SLA refers to the learning of nonnative language in the environment in which that language is spoken. **6. T**
  7. Knowing what sounds possible and what sounds are not possible in the language is called phonetics. **7. F**
- 



## True or False? *Answer Key*

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  - 9. Word formation is study under the scope of morpheme. **9. F**
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  - 11. Understanding the right context in using language is studied under the scope of pragmatics. **11. T**
  - 12. Interlanguage refers the language system learners create that is composed of numerous elements from both NL and TL. **12. T**
  - 13. The cessation of learning is what SLA refers to fossilization. **13. T**
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**(Chomsky, 1968, p. 100)**

*When we study human language, we are approaching what some might call the human essence, the distinctive qualities of mind that are, so far as we know, unique to [humans].*

# Reference

Chomsky, N. (1968). *Language and Mind*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.

Gass, S. M., Selinker, L. (2008). *Second Language Acquisition: An Introductory Course*. New York. Routledge.