

# Formal Approaches to Second Language Acquisition

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James Fullerton  
Oak Grove Elementary School  
[jfullerton1@k12tn.net](mailto:jfullerton1@k12tn.net)

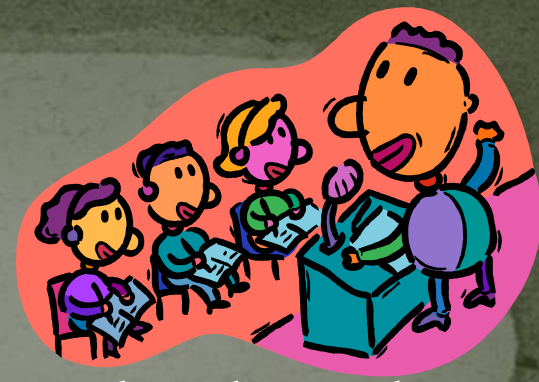
# Innatism



- Applies to both first language and second language acquisition.
- Mostly associated with Noam Chomsky.
- Chomsky theorized that acquiring a language is only made possible by an innate, biological Language Acquisition Device (LAD).
- Babies are genetically prewired for language.
- Babies are born with a Universal Grammar (UG).
- All languages have common principles.
- Errors are not corrected-student will correct themselves.
- Students are not expected to speak.

# Interactionist

- Mostly associated with Lev Vygotsky.
- Language development comes from both biological and social factors.
- Most effective when natural language is used by teachers, friends, and classmates.
- Comprehensible input is necessary. (What is being said by the native speaker to the second language learner needs to make sense)
- Second language learners will negotiate meaning by trial and error of the second language.
- Most errors will correct themselves; some errors need to be explicitly corrected.
- Students are not required to speak.



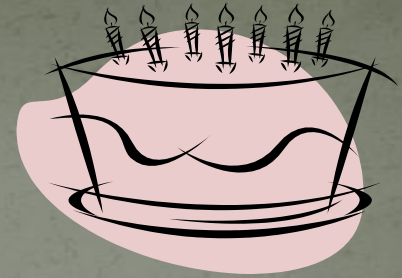


# Behaviorist



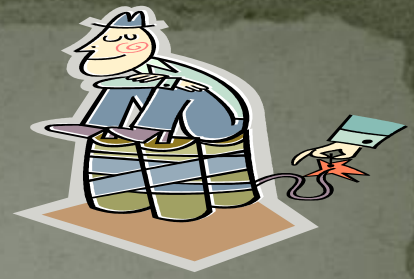
- Mostly associated with B.F. Skinner.
- Structured input
- Teaching methods include dialogues and drills by teacher. One popular method is the audiolingual method where students listen to tapes and memorize the dialogue.
- Repetition and imitation are key components.
- Students are required to speak.
- Errors are immediately corrected.

# Age Factors of SLA



- Critical Period Hypothesis-A theory that states that there is a critical period of time between early childhood and puberty in which a child can acquire a language easily. After this time brain function becomes lateralized and it is harder to learn a language and obtain native-like proficiency.
- Age affects the phonology of language acquisition. A child who acquires a language before puberty will likely speak that language without an accent.

# Contextual Factors of SLA



- Language -The similarities between a student's native language and the language they are trying to learn will affect how well they learn the second language. If they share a common alphabet or cognates it will make it easier to learn the new language. English and Spanish are similar; English and Arabic are not. Also, their proficiency in their native language will impact their second language. The more familiar they are with the second language the easier it will be for them.



# Contextual Factors continued



- The Student – The students themselves will play a key role in second language acquisition. A student's educational background will affect how well they learn a new language. Their goals , their motivation, and their peer group will heavily influence their ability to learn.
- Learning Process – The means by which a student is taught is important. Interaction with teacher and classmates will facilitate learning.

# \*\*\*Tips for Teachers\*\*\*

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- Lecturing is not an effective means of teaching English Language Learners.
- Allow for a wait time when asking questions, and speak slowly.
- Minimize use of idiomatic expressions.
- Interact with students as much as possible.
- Do not confuse social language with academic language.
- Remember that not all English Language Learners are at the same proficiency level.
- Speak to the students in a natural language.
- Use lots of visual images.

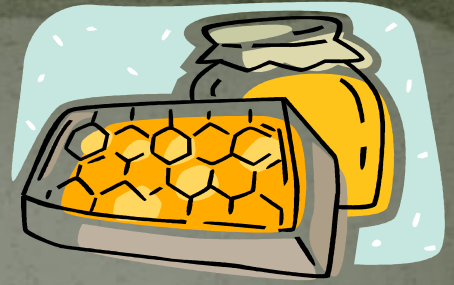


# The Best Approach



- The Interactionist approach will work best in most classrooms. The students are spoken to in a natural way with no pressure to speak or get the answer correct. The teacher often models for the student so that they can see and hear what the correct way is. Most learning is done implicitly while student errors are seldom corrected. Language is most often learned through content areas.

# My Favorite Approach



- In Mr. Fullerton's classroom the interactionist approach is used. Students are allowed and encouraged to interact with each other as well as the teacher. The teacher takes a friendly tone with students and speaks to them in a natural language. Students are always encouraged to ask questions. They are not asked to memorize and their errors are rarely corrected.

# References



- Fromkin, F., Rodman, R., & Hyams, N. (2003). *An Introduction to Language*. Boston, MA: Wadsworth.
- <http://www.wisegeek.com/what-is-universal-grammar.htm>
- <http://languagedevelopment.tripod.com/id15.html>
- Peregoy, S., & Boyle, O. (2005). *Reading, Writing, and Learning in ESL*. Boston, MA: Pearson.



# Resources

- The Internet TESL Journal: For Teachers of English as a Second Language
- <http://iteslj.org/>
- Language Learning Resource
- <http://www.language-learning-advisor.com/index.html>
- Fred Shannon's Interactionist Theory
- <http://www.fredshannon.blogspot.com/2005/12/interactionist-theory-in-second.html>
- ESL lesson plans, grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, games and activities for teachers and students.
- <http://www.eslflow.com/>
- Language and Literacy Development
- <http://www.carla.umn.edu/strategies/>

