

**The House that Jack Builided:
Second Language Acquisition in Practice**

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This booklet belongs to:

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Objectives

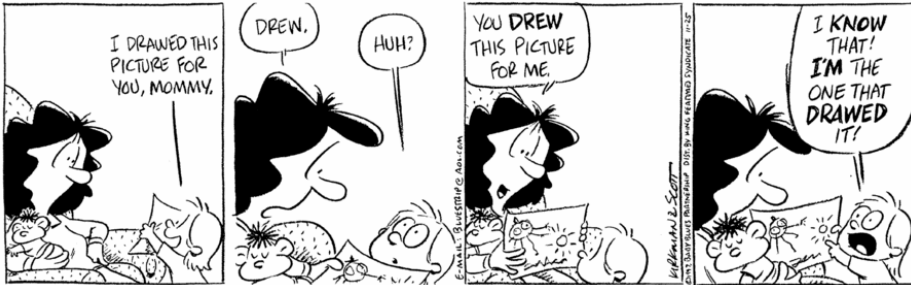
This session will answer three questions:

1. How is learning a second language as an adult different than learning a first language as a baby?
2. What methods work best for adult learners acquire a second language?
3. How can we best apply these methods in our ministries?

Definitions

1. **Acquire/Acquisition:** to learn, study, or otherwise “get” a language
2. **First Language/L1:** the first language you learned, your mother/father tongue
3. **Second Language/L2:** any language you learn after your first language (3rd, 4th...)
4. **Target Language:** the language goal/focus of the instruction/learning

First Language Acquisition



“All normal children learn whatever language or languages they are exposed to, from American Sign Language to Zuni. This ability is not dependent on race, social class, geography, or even intelligence (within a normal range). This ability is uniquely human. (An Introduction to Language, p. 368)

The Critical Period Hypothesis:

- Children are not _____ to speak their first languages(s).
- They _____ it (them) from the language rules and lexicon (vocabulary) that surrounds them.
- Babies’ brains come with language _____ called Universal Grammar, which expires in mid-childhood.

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Biblical Perspectives on Language Acquisition

Psalm 139:1-14

¹ O Lord, You have searched me and known me.

² You know when I sit down and when I rise up;

You understand my thought from afar.

³ You scrutinize my path and my lying down,
And are intimately acquainted with all my ways.

⁴ **Even before there is a word on my tongue,**

Behold, O Lord, You know it all.

⁵ You have enclosed me behind and before,

And laid Your hand upon me.

⁶ **Such knowledge is too wonderful for me;**

It is too high, I cannot attain to it.

⁷ Where can I go from Your Spirit?

Or where can I flee from Your presence?

⁸ If I ascend to heaven, You are there;
If I make my bed in Sheol, behold, You are there.

⁹ If I take the wings of the dawn,
If I dwell in the remotest part of the sea,

¹⁰ Even there Your hand will lead me,
And Your right hand will lay hold of me.

¹¹ If I say, "Surely the darkness will overwhelm me,
And the light around me will be night,"

¹² Even the darkness is not dark to You,
And the night is as bright as the day.
Darkness and light are alike to You.

¹³ **For You formed my inward parts;
You wove me in my mother's womb.**

¹⁴ **I will give thanks to You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made;
Wonderful are Your works,
And my soul knows it very well.**

How does this scripture (and the bold verses particularly) inform your perspective on God's design of the human body, mind, and our ability to learn language(s)?

Genesis 11:1-9

¹Now the whole earth used the same language and the same words. ²It came about as they journeyed east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar and settled there. ³They said to one another, "Come, let us make bricks and burn them thoroughly." And they used brick for stone, and they used tar for mortar. ⁴**They said, "Come, let us build for ourselves a city, and a tower whose top will reach into heaven, and let us make for ourselves a name, otherwise we will be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth."**

⁵The LORD came down to see the city and the tower which the sons of men had built. ⁶**The LORD said, "Behold,**

they are one people, and they all have the same language. And this is what they began to do, and now nothing which they purpose to do will be impossible for them. ⁷Come, let Us go down and there confuse their language, so that they will not understand one another's speech."

⁸So the LORD scattered them abroad from there over the face of the whole earth; and they stopped building the city. ⁹Therefore its name was called Babel, because there the LORD confused the language of the whole earth; and from there the LORD scattered them abroad over the face of the whole earth.

How does this scripture inform your perspective on God's and humans' purposes for language?

In what ways do you think the earthly language limitations set by God have led to impossibilities for humanity?

Acts 2:1-11

When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place.

² And suddenly there came from heaven a noise like a violent rushing wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. ³ And there appeared to them tongues as of fire distributing themselves, and they rested on each one of them. ⁴ **And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance.**

⁵ Now there were Jews living in Jerusalem, devout men from every nation under heaven. ⁶ **And when this sound occurred, the crowd came**

together, and were bewildered because each one of them was hearing them speak in his own language.

⁷ They were amazed and astonished, saying, "Why, are not all these who are speaking Galileans?" ⁸ **And how is it that we each hear them in our own language to which we were born?**

⁹ Parthians and Medes and Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, ¹⁰ Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the districts of Libya around Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, ¹¹ Cretans and Arabs—we hear them in our own tongues speaking of the mighty deeds of God."

How does this scripture inform your perspective of God's dominion over the human body, mind, and ability to communicate?

Adult Second Language Acquisition

The Challenge

We cannot teach adult learners the way that we (native speakers) learned it because we *weren't taught*.

Acquisition Order

Put the 3 statements below in the correct acquisition order for native speakers, and how non-native speakers are usually taught.

Native Speakers

Non-Native Speakers

- | | | |
|-------|--|-------|
| _____ | A. Learn to read & write English | _____ |
| _____ | B. Learn to speak English | _____ |
| _____ | C. Learn grammatical rules for English | _____ |

Principles of Adult Learning

1. Adults are _____ - _____ in their learning.
2. Adults have _____ of experience to serve as resources as they learn.
3. Adults are _____, problem-solving learners.
4. Adults want their learning to be immediately _____ to their lives.
5. Adults want to know _____ something needs to be learned.

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Second Language Acquisition Theories

Generally accepted second language acquisition theories seek to address the following issues:

- **Cognitive** (how the brain processes info)
 - Practicing
 - Processing
 - Monitoring input & output

- **Affective** (how we feel)
 - Anxiety
 - Encouragement/Motivation

- **Linguistic** (relating to learning language specifically)
 - Transfer/interference from L1
 - Interlanguage
 - Errors, mistakes, & noticing

Read the excerpt from [The CAELA Guide for Adult ESL Trainers](#) on the following 2 pages.

1. Write **C** (for Cognitive), **A** (for Affective), or **L** (for Linguistic) in the box next to each recommendation in order to identify the main language acquisition theory involved. After reading the excerpt, re-read the examples above for additional help.

2. Underline instructional actions that particularly resonate with you, or that you would like to focus more on in the coming year.

What Instructional Approaches Support Second Language Development in Adults?

Meaningful interaction and natural communication in the target language are necessary for successful language acquisition. Learners need to use the language, not simply talk about it. Give learners opportunities and purposes for communication that reflect or relate to their lives (e.g., role-playing a doctor/patient exchange or creating a chart with information on local medical services). Use authentic materials in activities whenever possible (e.g., listening for details in a voicemail message).

Effective language use involves an automatic processing of language. To become proficient, learners need to move from a concentrated focus on grammar, forms, and structures to using language as a tool to accomplish communication tasks. Think about the purpose of each part of the lesson (e.g., is it important that the learner produce a specific grammar point or communicate an overall idea?) and limit corrective feedback to that purpose.

Language learners can monitor their speech for correctness when they have time to focus their attention on form and know the language rules involved. Give learners sufficient time for activities, to communicate, and to monitor their performance. Integrate lessons on grammar, structures, and language rules that are relevant to the communication task at hand (e.g., present lessons on imperatives when discussing giving directions) so that learners become familiar with correct structures and context. Focus activity objectives so that learners are not asked to process and monitor too many points at one time

Second language acquisition occurs when learners are exposed to language that is at and slightly above their level of comprehension. In the materials you use and in your own speech, expose learners to language that is both at and slightly

above what they can comfortably understand. Offer a balance of easier reading and listening activities with more challenging ones. Provide pictures, gestures, and prompts when learners are asked to use more complex language.

People have filters (created by a variety of factors such as motivation, self-confidence, or anxiety) that can support or disrupt acquisition of a second language.

Create a classroom environment in which learners feel comfortable using and taking risks with English. Use activities that ask learners to work together or share information to build a sense of familiarity and community. Make sure the physical environment is as comfortable as possible. Avoid constant error correction and include activities that focus on overall ability to communicate meaning. Recycle topics or activities that motivate learners.

There are periods during which learners make systematic errors that are a natural part of language learning.

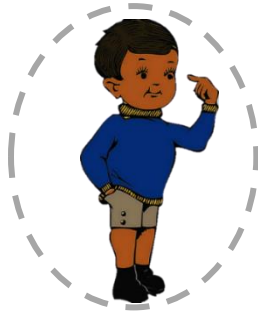
These may be similar to those of a child learning a first language (e.g., adding -ed to signify all past tense verbs) or similar to patterns in a learner's native language (e.g., Spanish speakers placing adjectives after nouns, such as shirt blue). If interlanguage errors appear to be normal and developmental, provide feedback and modeling of correct structures to support learners as they move through these steps. If an error persists, consider more structured practice on the point.

There is a silent period during which learners are absorbing the new language prior to producing it.

The length of this period may vary for each learner. Allow learners time to adjust to the new language and begin to internalize its sounds and patterns. Use activities that allow them to demonstrate comprehension without having to produce language (e.g., say new vocabulary and ask learners to hold up picture cards that illustrate each word).

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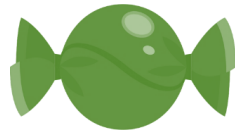
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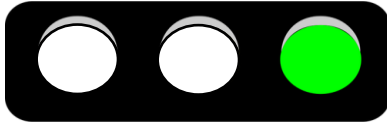
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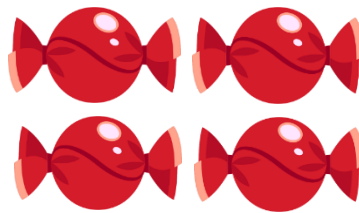
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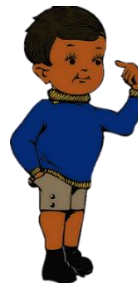
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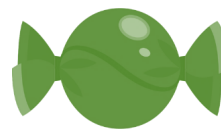


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Metacognitive Questions:

1. How critical was the teacher's body language in conveying meaning to you?
2. What cognitive skills did you employ?
3. Did the use of candy make the activity more engaging to you?
4. How did you feel about attempting to create a sound that is not present in your first language?

Spaced Retrieval Opportunity (aka "A Quiz")

First language and second language acquisition are _____
because the first is _____
and the second is _____.

Two important considerations in adult second language acquisition
are _____
and _____.

Conclusion

"If I had the gift of being able to speak in other languages without learning them, and could speak in every language there is in all of heaven and earth, but didn't love others, I would only be making noise." 1 Corinthians 13:1

References & Resources

An Introduction to Language by Victoria Fromkin, Robert Rodman, & Nina Hyams, Wadsworth CENGAGE Learning, 2011

Beginning to Work with Adult English Language Learners: Some Considerations by MaryAnn Cunningham Florez & Miriam Burt, NCELE, 2001

ESL Best Practices for Teaching Adults

Activities to Promote Interaction and Communication

http://www.cal.org/caela/tools/program_development/elltoolkit/Part2-41Interaction&Communication.pdf

Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL) Practitioner Toolkit: Working with Adult English Language Learners

<http://www.cal.org/caela/tools/instructional/CombinedFiles1.pdf>

Center for Adult English Language Acquisition (CAELA) Network Briefs

<http://www.cal.org/caelanetwork/resources/briefs.html>

National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy (NCSALL) Focus on Basics

<http://www.ncsall.net/index.php?id=986.html>

Making Meaning Making Change: Participatory Curriculum Development for Adult ESL Literacy by Elsa Roberts Auerbach, Center for Applied Linguistics

<https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED356688.pdf>