
Related research and language study

Psycholinguistics

97-240 Davies, William D. (Iowa U.). Morphological uniformity and the Null Subject Parameter in adult SLA. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition* (New York), **18**, 4 (1996), 475-93.

An area of keen interest in applying Chomsky's Universal Grammar (UG) parameter-setting model to second language acquisition (SLA) has been the Pro-Drop or Null Subject Parameter. However, the nature of this parameter changes dramatically from the earlier Jaeggli and Rizzi conception with Jaeggli and Safir's later proposal linking uniform morphological agreement paradigms with null subjects. Data reported here show that a number of English as a second language learners exhibit knowledge that English is morphologically nonuniform yet still accept

English null subject sentences. This is inconsistent with the predictions of the Morphological Uniformity Hypothesis and renders uncertain its applicability to SLA. The results are considered in light of a number of possible positions that can be adopted when faced with data that disconfirm a hypothesis within the UG SLA research programme; it is concluded that the Morphological University Hypothesis is disconfirmed and that any reformulation of the Null Subject Parameter must take these results into consideration.

97-241 de Bot, Kees (U. of Nijmegen). Review article: The psycholinguistics of the output hypothesis. *Language Learning* (Cambridge, MA), **46**, 3 (1996), 529-55.

In this article the author attempts to elucidate the psycholinguistic mechanics of Swain's 'output hypothesis'. Taking the information processing approach as a starting point and relating that to Levelt's model of language production and Anderson's learning theory, it is argued that output serves an important role in second language acquisition, in particular because it generates highly specific input which the cognitive system needs to build up a

coherent set of knowledge. Output also plays a direct role in enhancing fluency by turning declarative knowledge into procedural knowledge; and can also play an indirect role in the acquisition of declarative knowledge by triggering input that the learner can use for the generation of new declarative knowledge. On the basis of an analysis of think-aloud protocols, it is hypothesised that the locus of the effect of output is in the transition of declarative to procedural knowledge.

97-242 Eckman, Fred R. (U. of Wisconsin-Milwaukee). On evaluating arguments for special nativism in second language acquisition theory. *Second Language Research* (London), **12**, 4 (1996), 398-419.

This article attempts to evaluate several arguments that have been put forth in favour of special nativism in second language acquisition (SLA). Specifically, the cases for each of the following claims are considered: (1) that Universal Grammar (UG) being implicated in second language (L2) acquisition is the null hypothesis; (2) that any theory of SLA necessarily needs a theory

of grammar; and (3) that showing that interlanguage grammars are undetermined by the available input implies that UG must be accessible in L2 learning. In each case, it is argued that the arguments for special nativism are not compelling, and that it is therefore reasonable to consider a research programme in SLA theory that is based on general nativism.

97-243 Ellis, Nick C. (U. of Wales, Bangor). Analyzing language sequence in the sequence of language acquisition: some comments on Major and Ioup. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition* (New York), **18**, 3 (1996), 361-8.

This article is a response to both Major's and Ioup's criticisms of the author's 1996 article: *Sequencing in SLA* [cf. abstracts 96-393, 97-246 and 97-247]. Ellis agrees with his critics' analysis of associative (connectionist, constructivist) learning approaches to language acquisition as investigations into what representations can result when simple learning mechanisms for distributional analysis are exposed to complex language evidence, but disagrees with Major's claim that behaviourism and connectionism cannot explain creative aspects of language. After answering in detail the main criticisms, Ellis claims

that his view of Universal Grammar (UG) has been misread by Ioup. He thinks that UG is the most complete description of language competence to date, but he sees it as a consequence, not a condition, of development, as the product of the developmental system. He concludes that nativists and empiricists will continue to argue about their essential and principled differences, but that in practice their enterprises are highly complementary. Second language acquisition research is so much fun because there is both language and learning to be understood.

97-244 Felix, Sascha W. (Passau U.). Mental biology in second-language acquisition. *Linguistics* (Berlin), **34**, 5 (1996), 1139–58.

This paper examines the question of whether or not second language (L2) learners have access to principles of universal grammar (UG) from the perspective of a somewhat extreme learning situation. A group of German high school students who were exposed to English exclusively through classroom teaching were tested for their ability to pass correct judgments on a set of English structures significantly different from those of their native language. The results indicate that as a group these

students fared considerably worse than reported for other types of L2 learners in the literature. This suggests that, under the specific learning conditions of classroom teaching, the students did not have access to UG principles. However, at the individual level significant differences between students were found. It is argued that access to universal grammar is controlled both by specific aspects of the learning situation and by an individual's mental biology.

97-245 Hamilton, Robert (U. of South Carolina). Against undetermined reflexive binding. *Second Language Research* (London), **12**, 4 (1996), 420–46.

Reflexive binding has for a decade now been a fruitful area of inquiry for researchers seeking to establish that adult second language (L2) learners have access to Universal Grammar (UG), in this case access to the binding conditions. For example, it has been claimed that some L2 learners of English allow English reflexives to be bound by long-distance (LD) antecedents even when such LD binding is underdetermined for these learners with respect to their first language grammar(s) and the L2 input. This paper argues that there are four major reasons why the data underlying this claim do not support UG access. First, there are theoretical and empirical difficulties with the Agr(ement)-based account of

reflexive binding assumed by these researchers that undercut the argument for UG access from these studies. Secondly, underdetermination fails to obtain in principle due to the possibility of semantically-based logophoric binding in the relevant languages. Thirdly, there are theoretical and empirical reasons to call into question the assumption (necessary to a UG-access account) that L2 learners mistook polymorphemic English reflexives for monomorphemic reflexives. Finally, there are several methodological factors which likely inflated the rate of LD binding in many of the relevant studies, again undercutting the argument for UG access from putative underdetermination.

97-246 Ioup, Georgette (U. of New Orleans). Grammatical knowledge and memorized chunks: a response to Ellis. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition* (New York), **18**, 3 (1996), 355–60.

Ellis's (1996) claim that the acquisition of syntax and discourse results from learning particular sequences of words in stock phrases and collocations is argued to be unwarranted for both first and second language acquisition [cf. abstract 96–393]. Whereas Ellis sees grammar as developing from the knowledge provided by the distributional properties of words, words which in turn are acquired through long-term storage of sequential patterns from which the learner abstracts regularities, Ioup argues that the majority of the abstractions observed in language acquisition are not available through left-to-right distributional parsing.

After the analysis of examples from phonology, morphology, syntax and discourse, Ioup claims that the acquisition of grammar, especially, depends foremost on the abstract grammatical knowledge the learner brings to the task. In conclusion, the author acknowledges that her disagreement with Ellis is probably more a question of degree than of fundamental differences. She disagrees with Ellis's claim that 'vast amounts' of grammatical acquisition derive from the analysis of memorised chunks, although she acknowledges that some takes place. [cf. also abstracts 97–243 and 97–247]

97-247 Major, Roy C. (Arizona State U.). Chunking and phonological memory: a response to Ellis. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition* (New York), **18**, 3 (1996), 351–4.

This article is a critique of Ellis's (1996) analysis of sequencing in second language acquisition (SLA) based on a connectionist view of language learning [cf. abstract 96–393]. Ellis's claim that learning is a result of relative strengthening and weakening of

neural pathways due to varying input is acknowledged as a good explanation of many aspects of language acquisition, but is criticised for being incapable of explaining major areas of the SLA process. Besides not being able to explain the

creative aspect of language, Major argues that there are other aspects of language that such a model cannot account for. For example, the claim that one reason why simple structures are acquired before complex ones is because they are more frequent is simply not true (e.g. the late acquisition of /θ/ in English in spite of its presence in many contexts such

as the definite article, relative and possessive pronouns). Although conceding that much of language use consists of habit and memorised sequences, the author argues that the existence of rules and Universal Grammar is still needed in order to explain the SLA process. [cf. also abstracts 97–243 and 97–246]

97–248 Major, Roy C. (Arizona State U.) **and Kim, Eunyi** (Arizona). The similarity differential rate hypothesis. *Language Learning* (Cambridge, MA), **46**, 3 (1996), 465–96.

This study explored three factors as they relate to second language (L2) phonological acquisition: similarity, dissimilarity and markedness. Previous studies have made claims about difficulty, order of acquisition, and ultimate achievement depending on L2 exposure but have often presented conflicting claims and results. This study incorporates similarity and dissimilarity into a hypothesis about rate of acquisition: the rate of acquisition for a dissimilar phenomenon is faster than for a similar phenomenon. Although not stated in the hypothesis,

effects of markedness are accounted for: degree of markedness, an intervening factor, can increase or decrease rate. The claims are strongly supported by analyses of two experiments investigating the acquisition of /j/ and /z/ of 10 adult Korean learners of English, as well as by reanalyses of data from previous studies. Although the evidence presented here deals exclusively with phonology, the authors suggest that it should be possible to test the hypothesis for other linguistic phenomena.

97–249 Müller, Natascha (U. of Hamburg). V2 in first-language acquisition: early child grammars fall within the range of universal grammar. *Linguistics* (Berlin), **34**, 5 (1996), 993–1028.

This paper seeks to show that young children infer grammars for the primary data on the basis of innate knowledge (universal grammar). The most interesting cases are intermediate grammars, which allow sentence structures that do not correspond to the experimental data (but to some other natural language) and disallow sentence structures that are grammatical with respect to the target grammar. The investigation concentrates on the setting of three parameters that are held to describe adult German, a

V2 language (i.e. where verbs must be in second position): the Case parameter, the head-position parameter, and the finiteness parameter. It is shown that bilingual as well as monolingual children may abduce 'wrong' grammars, which, however, correspond to other V2 languages, like Yiddish, for example. One of the possible reasons for wrong choices within a parameterised grammatical system is discussed, namely the confusing categorical status of complementisers.

97–250 O'Grady, William (U. of Hawai'i, Manoa). Language acquisition without Universal Grammar: a general nativist proposal for L2 learning. *Second Language Research* (London), **12**, 4 (1996), 374–97.

This article explores the prospects for a 'general nativist' theory of first and second language acquisition. A modular acquisition device that does not include Universal Grammar (UG) is outlined and its role in the emergence of a first language (L1) is considered. The relevance of this proposal for a

theory of second language acquisition is then explored, leading to the suggestion that the properties and outcome typical of postadolescent second language (L2) learning can be traced to the fact that adults have only partial access to the L1 acquisition device.

97–251 Wolfe-Quintero, Kate (U. of Hawai'i, Manoa). Nativism does not equal Universal Grammar. *Second Language Research* (London), **12**, 4 (1996), 335–73.

This article is about nativist theories of language learning and how they apply to second language acquisition (SLA). The authors seeks a nativism that goes beyond the scope of Universal Grammar (UG), that explains the human cognitive capacity for language learning (language knowledge, learning, and processing), the learning of all language

structures found in natural languages (both core and peripheral), and SLA (learnability, development, transfer, and differential success). Such a theory does not yet exist, but current nativist theories (linguistic, developmental, general and connectionist) suggest ways in which such a theory might be developed.