Introducing Second Language Acquisition
Perspectives and Practices
Kirsten M. Hummel
Introducing Second Language Acquisition
Linguistics in the World

*Linguistics in the World* is a textbook series focusing on the study of language in the real world, enriching students’ understanding of how language works through a balance of theoretical insights and empirical findings. Presupposing no or only minimal background knowledge, each of these titles is intended to lay the foundation for students’ future work, whether in language science, applied linguistics, language teaching, or speech sciences.

*What Is Sociolinguistics?*, by Gerard van Herk
*The Sounds of Language*, by Elizabeth Zsiga
*Introducing Second Language Acquisition: Perspectives and Practices*, by Kirsten M. Hummel

**Forthcoming**

*An Introduction to Language*, by Kirk Hazen
*The Nature of Language*, by Gary Libben
*Sociolinguistics in Language Teaching*, by Gary Barkhuizen
To my father, for the inspiration of his example: kind to all and always supportive
Louis E. Hummel

And to my daughters, for daily joys and for keeping me grounded
Louissa and Marlyse
# Table of Contents

Acknowledgments xi

1 **Introduction** 1

2 **First Language Acquisition** 5

2.0 Chapter overview 6
2.1 From sound to word 6
2.2 From word to sentence 10
2.3 Theoretical views 13
2.4 First language vs second language acquisition 18
2.5 Summing up 25

Key concepts 26
Self-assessment questions 26
Discussion questions 27
Exercises/Project ideas 28
Further reading and viewing 30
References 31

3 **Language Learning Contexts** 35

3.0 Chapter overview 36
3.1 Naturalistic contexts 36
3.2 Instructed learning 41
3.3 Summing up 52

Key concepts 52
Self-assessment questions 53
Discussion questions 54
Exercises/Project ideas 54
Further reading and viewing 55
References 55
4  Theoretical Perspectives: Past and Present  59
  4.0  Chapter overview  60
  4.1  Contrastive analysis  61
  4.2  Error analysis  64
  4.3  Universal Grammar  67
  4.4  The Monitor Model/Input Hypothesis  70
  4.5  Information processing/cognitive approach  75
  4.6  Processing-related hypotheses  77
  4.7  Emergentism and usage-based approaches  86
  4.8  The Sociocultural approach  91
  4.9  Summing up  93
  Key concepts  94
  Self-assessment questions  95
  Discussion questions  96
  Exercises/Project ideas  97
  Further reading and viewing  97
  References  99

5  Teaching Approaches and Instructional Issues  105
  5.0  Chapter overview  106
  5.1  Historical and current perspectives on language teaching  106
  5.2  Classroom instructional issues  118
  5.3  Summing up  129
  Key concepts  130
  Self-assessment questions  130
  Discussion questions  131
  Exercises/Project ideas  132
  Further reading and viewing  132
  References  133

6  Second Language Development  137
  6.0  Chapter overview  138
  6.1  Common processes and influences  138
  6.2  L2 development across linguistic sub-areas  144
  6.3  Investigating learner language: Language corpora  159
  6.4  Summing up  159
  Key concepts  160
  Self-assessment questions  160
  Discussion questions  161
  Exercises/Project ideas  162
  Further reading and viewing  162
  References  163
# Table of Contents

## 7 The Age Factor  
169

- 7.0 Chapter overview  
- 7.1 The critical period hypothesis  
- 7.2 Abnormal instances: Children raised in isolation  
- 7.3 Empirical studies  
- 7.4 Exceptional cases  
- 7.5 Summing up  
- Key concepts  
- Self-assessment questions  
- Discussion questions  
- Exercises/Project ideas  
- Further reading and viewing  
- References

## 8 Individual Differences  
193

- 8.0 Chapter overview  
- 8.1 Intelligence  
- 8.2 Language learning aptitude  
- 8.3 Attitudes and motivation  
- 8.4 Personality  
- 8.5 Learning style and cognitive style  
- 8.6 Learning strategies  
- 8.7 Summing up  
- Key concepts  
- Self-assessment questions  
- Discussion questions  
- Exercises/Project ideas  
- Further reading and viewing  
- References

## 9 Bilingualism  
223

- 9.0 Chapter overview  
- 9.1 Who is a bilingual? Definitions of bilingualism  
- 9.2 Bilingual development  
- 9.3 Bilingual lexical representation and lexical access  
- 9.4 Bilingual cognition  
- 9.5 Summing up  
- Key concepts  
- Self-assessment questions  
- Discussion questions  
- Exercises/Project ideas  
- References
Further reading and viewing 245
References 246

10 Concluding Words 251
   Epilogue 252

Glossary 255
Index 267
First of all, my sincere gratitude to the instigator of this book, Danielle Desco-teaux, production editor at Wiley-Blackwell, who began the process leading to the privilege I have had of writing this book. Her enthusiasm for this endeavor over the long period of development and production has been a constant source of inspiration. She has the rare ability of projecting contagious enthusiasm while at the same time drawing attention to further needed improvements. I also want to thank Julia Kirk, project editor, and Annie Rose, development editor, for their expertise and professional guidance (and prodding when needed). I especially want to thank all these individuals for their understanding while I underwent six months of chemotherapy during the early development of the book; their support in allowing flexibility in the development schedule was a godsend. Appreciation also goes to Abi Saffrey, for her help throughout the copy-edit phase.

I also want to thank the multiple reviewers of this book from its early stages through its revisions for their invaluable comments and suggestions, including: Carol Chapelle, Joseph Galasso, Nicholas Groom, Shaozhong Lui, and Sebastian Rasinger. Their thoughtful remarks and advice were enormously helpful in developing the text through to the present version. A special thanks goes to Michel Paradis for his careful reading and characteristically perceptive feedback on the bilingualism chapter (and for tracking down an elusive, but highly prized illustration). On a similar note, I must thank Nick Ellis for reading a section relating to his expertise, as well as local colleagues, Barbara Bacz, Leif French, and Susan Parks, for their generous feedback and pointed advice on various sections of the manuscript. I hope I have not misinterpreted or poorly conveyed the advice these many individuals have offered, but if so, the fault lies with me alone.

I also wish to acknowledge the native-speaker advice and intuitions of Mariem Boukadi, Zélie Guéval and Hongling Wang, as well as Vera Sarić for her unique contribution. Ivan Maffezzini also offered native-speaker expertise along with the inspiration from his spectacular view over Lake Como.

This is also an opportunity to acknowledge early role models during my own years as a university student: professors, who, for the most part, are most
certainly unaware of their enduring influence on my own interest in second language acquisition (SLA): Fred Genesee, Harlan Lane, Charles Perfetti, Tom Scovel, Lydia White, and especially Michel Paradis.

I owe a wealth of gratitude to the second language research community. The published material that second language scholars have produced has been an endless source of knowledge and inspiration.

The many students enrolled in my courses at Laval University deserve special thanks. The comments and questions of each undergraduate and graduate cohort over the years have been fundamental in providing invisible guidelines behind the scenes for this attempt at an accessible overview of the field of second language acquisition.

I must also thank members of my extended family: Sylvie Brossard, Maurice Bergeron, Christina Gordon, Vera Sarić, and Marcel-Eloi Verreault, as well as Alan Manning and Sue Walker, all of whom were there in times of need. And finally, my special gratitude to my father, Louis Hummel, for his unwavering support and for communicating to me his passion for languages; my sister Catherine for her encouragements and her ability to put everything in its proper perspective; my brother Paul for his dependable support; and my daughters Louissa and Marlyse, who amazingly tolerated their mother’s long-term preoccupation with “the book” and who complicate and enrich my life in such endlessly creative ways.
Welcome to this introduction to second language acquisition. What is second language acquisition (SLA)? In brief, this term refers to beginning the learning of another language after a first language (L1) has been acquired.

Note that opinions vary about what might be considered the earliest age from which second language learning would be differentiated from simultaneous language acquisition or bilingual first language acquisition (two languages learned at the same time). In general, however, second language acquisition describes learning another language after the early years of childhood. (Note that the importance of age in acquiring another language will be discussed in Chapter 7, and issues related to bilingual acquisition and bilingualism will be discussed in Chapter 9.)

Second language acquisition is a phenomenon found among people from all parts of the world and all walks of life. The well-known biblical story about the Tower of Babel is one of the earliest references to the importance and urgency of knowing another language. According to the biblical account, in order to prevent people from cooperating in their goal of building a tower in the town of Babel that would reach heaven, God commanded “Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another’s speech.” The tactic was successful and different language groups abandoned their project and moved to separate areas of the world.

Of course it is not necessary to believe the biblical story of Babel to understand the importance of being able to communicate with one’s neighbor or with an individual on the other side of the globe. The desire to learn another language might stem from a personal choice to broaden one’s horizons or from a more complex set of life circumstances, such as an urgent need to find a job in a new country. In addition, the growing ubiquity of international travel, along with electronic means of communicating across time zones, has increased