The dream of a natural method

The theory propounded in this paper rests on two pillars. One is the history of foreign language teaching, made up of the efforts, over the centuries, of countless language teachers to find effective ways of teaching and to understand what was happening in their classrooms. It is, in sum, the cumulative body of experience, reflections and research that come under the heading of foreign language teaching pedagogy.

The other pillar is constituted by modern research on natural first and second language acquisition. Over the past decades linguists and psychologists have created a steadily increasing body of research on both the natural acquisition of first as well as of additional languages. The growing concern with the problems, needs and rights of immigrants and other minorities which in the past had all too often been overlooked by the school system generated fresh insights into language teaching problems. Research as well as practical experience with informal learning outside school is now making its impact on traditional foreign language teaching philosophies.

For the first time in history, then, the long-cherished dream of teaching “according to nature” might come true: a substantial knowledge of how humans acquire a first and second language naturally has been made available.

Of course, we never seem to know enough. The business of language acquisition is intimately connected with the basic question of how the mind works. The more we know here, the more we are aware how little we know yet. However, we are not concerned with ultimate truths but the practical matter of effective teaching techniques. These, we have had in the past and have them now. What we have lacked, however, is a theory to clearly identify them in the mass of competing techniques and to differentiate the contexts in which those teaching activities would succeed or fail.

It is my contention that we have reached a stage where we can take a forward step by combining the two strands of foreign language teaching tradition and natural acquisition research.

Five Hypotheses about Language Learning and Teaching

Five hypotheses are posited to explain how foreign languages are acquired and successfully taught: 1. the language-intuition hypothesis; 2. the dialogue hypothesis, meant to replace the input hypothesis; 3. the exploration-of-patterns hypothesis; 4. the preferred language hypothesis; 5. the short-circuiting hypothesis, meant to replace the monitor hypothesis. The cumulative evidence of the history of foreign language teaching and modern acquisition research converge so that long standing methodological issues can be solved.

1 The language-intuition hypothesis

The theory propounded in this paper rests on two pillars. One is the history of foreign language teaching, made up of the efforts, over the centuries, of countless language teachers to find effective ways of teaching and to understand what was happening in their classrooms. It is, in sum, the cumulative body of experience, reflections and research that come under the heading of foreign language teaching pedagogy.

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2 The language-intuition hypothesis

This hypothesis is, of course, fundamental. It has frequently been discussed by other authors, using a different terminology. It simply states that in informal acquisition situations – and to a lesser extent also in formal instruction – we crack the linguistic code not through the powers of our conscious intellect, nor by being told the rules, but by some inner knowledge-programme of which we are not aware. Life abounds in such knowledge systems; it can itself be seen as an information processing apparatus. Even a simple single-celled organism, primitive as it is, could not exist without gathering some information from its environment (Lorenz 1973).
Take the perception of colours – in humans or other beings. Colours are not just “out there”. They are constructed and computed on the basis of physical data. How colourful the world is, or if it is colourful at all, depends on the internal programmes of each species. It is only in this century that science is deciphering our colour producing mechanisms.

Just as perceiving is the result of our imposing hypotheses on the incoming information, so is language acquisition dependent on internal programmes to unravel the mysteries of syntax and morphology. How else can we understand the fact that we apply rules without knowing them? This is the miracle of language: we learn to handle something skillfully which is normally far beyond our intellectual capacity to understand. In analyzing perception, the cognitive psychologist Egon Brunsvik (1934) posited “ratiomorphic”, as opposed to rational faculties. L1 acquisition owes much more to the ratiomorphic than it does to the rational faculties of the mind. However, questions concerning the extent and the language-specificity of underlying ratiomorphic acquisition systems are far from resolved.

Consider an engineer who designs and constructs a new engine. He can label every part of it, knows why it is there and how it works. There is no mystery in this. At the same time, in speaking, he constructs sentences, simple and complex ones. Yet he is to a large extent ignorant of the rules he applies when building his sentences and would have difficulties in correctly identifying their constituents. This cannot be explained away by assuming that he knew the rules once and now uses them “automatically”. We do not know the rules, but something inside us – here called language intuition – does. In this respect, speaking resembles our perception of shapes, colours, thirst or cold etc.: normally, we have no idea of the manifold inner computing processes that bring about these reactions and activities.

### 3 The dialogue hypothesis vs. the input hypothesis

Our language intuition comes into play only if we start communicating. It cannot function in a linguistic and semantic void. Communication precedes, and leads into, language. We can only acquire language because we have already learnt how to communicate. Later on, grammar develops out of actual language use.

This has been vividly documented by Bruner’s experiments at Oxford where he studied the transition from prelinguistic to linguistic communication in the interactions of mothers with their babies (Bruner 1983). In highly routinized day-to-day interactions mothers know how to create a communicative “scaffold” to support the acquisition of language. Since the child is thoroughly familiar with the constantly recurring situations of play, nursing, feeding etc., he learns to understand what his mother intends to do and expects of him, and is then able to transfer this knowledge onto the concomitant language that his mother provides him with at the same time. Thus mothers succeed in getting something done partly with words – such as the handing over of a toy – which before had to be managed without the help of words. Learning how to mean with words is an extension of what the child can already do. He understands the pull of the situation and applies this situational/functional understanding to the words. Because he can make sense of what people do, he can make sense of language. Later, when he already has some language, his direct understanding of utterance parts combined with a grasp of the situation will significantly contribute to acquire even more language.

Recurring situational-functional meanings which the child can interpret with the mother’s assistance provide basic categorization devices for the mapping of linguistic forms. Grammar springs from the logic of action and the child’s knowledge of the world. An obvious example is the recognition of singular and plural, where his knowledge of the world alerts the child to look for similar distinctions in the linguistic forms. Likewise, semantic-syntactic relations which appear in the two-word stage such as possessor – possessed (Daddy car), actor – action (Daddy sleeping) and action – object (bring book) are a direct outcome of the child’s growing experience in acting on the world. Semantics precedes, and leads into, syntax.

Meaningful communication, however, is a necessary, not a sufficient condition for the acquisition of more complicated syntactical constraints. Grammar, as Bruner (1984:169) readily concedes, “constitutes its own problem space”. This is why we postulate internal processing devices specially geared to the acquisition of grammar.

Krashen (1981; 1982) reduces the role of communication to comprehension. For him, comprehensible input is the single most important factor in language learning. The crucial dimension for the acquisition of grammar is exposure to language that is understood. While acknowledging that comprehension is the essential prerequisite for the learner to unravel the language system, we reject the term “input hypothesis”, because it seems to imply that output is negligible. This is misleading in as much as it is the active participation of the learner which contributes decisively to comprehension. This latter view is more in consonance with evolutionary theory, which sees the organism as an active problem solver. It is, of course, the parent who at first carries the linguistic responsibility, who tries to follow the child’s train of thought, pick up whatever clues the child has given and re-direct attention to a joint focus. However, comprehension, the relating of linguistic forms to the world and to what we want to achieve in it, is the result of concerted action.

Consequently, it is only by examining dialogue – instead of describing mere input – that we can understand how children develop their language. Here is an example of a two-year-old child talking with her father while looking at a picture book:
Gisa: Wurst aufgegessen.
Father: Ja, der Hund hat die Wurst aufgegessen. Und jetzt, was macht der Mann jetzt?
Gisa: Wiedaholen, Wurst.
Father: Ja, der läuft hinter dem Hund her und hat’n Stock in der Hand. - Was will er denn mit dem Stock machen?
Gisa: Hauen.
Father: Wen will er denn hauen?
Gisa: Hund.
Father: Aha.
Gisa: Hund hauen.
Father: Warum hauen?
Gisa: Mit’m Tock.
Father: Warum will er den Hund denn hauen?
Gisa: Mit’m Tock.
Father: Ah so, mit’m Stock. Gut.

Gisa is able to handle two-word utterances. However, in her second utterance, she reverts to two separate one-word-sentences, as the pause between wiedaholen and Wurst and intonational contours indicate. Later on, prompted by her father’s questions, she produces another two-word sentence: Hund hauen. It has been said that “vertical” constructions (in the printed version of the dialogue the words appear below each other) develop into “horizontal” ones (see Hatch 1978):

    Hauen
    Hund

Likewise, the vertical construction

    Hund hauen
    mit’m Tock

will later develop into a horizontal construction (a multiword sentence). All this happens in dialogue where the “collaborative construction of meaning” takes place – as G. Wells, reporting on the Bristol Language Development Study, puts it (Wells 1985:404). Notice also that the child obviously ignores the why-question perhaps because she cannot yet “give reasons”. The child sets her own pace of development and the parents are happy to accept.

4 The principle of communication

What does all this have to do with foreign language teaching?

Consider the answer that Roger Brown, one of the leading experts on mother-tongue acquisition, gave to the question of how parents could facilitate their children’s learning of language: “Believe that your child can understand more than he or she can say; and seek, above all, to communicate. To understand and be understood… If you concentrate on communicating, everything else will follow” (Brown 1979:26).

Compare likewise the advice Hatch gives to second-language learners: “The most important thing of all has to be ‘don’t give up’” (Hatch 1978:434), in other words, keep the conversation going. Hatch assumes that second language learning evolves out of learning how to do conversation. Clearly we do not learn either a first nor a second language by first building up a repertoire of words and structures, later to be put to use in discourse. Though languages are acquired systematically, step by step, they are used for communication from the very outset.

I believe that these findings have important implications for foreign language teaching in classrooms, since they need not be artificially imposed upon teaching methodology from outside but reinforce ideas that have been there throughout the history of foreign language teaching. For instance, the Latin schools of the Middle Ages could only emphasize grammar in the actual lessons because “real” communication in Latin was taken for granted or enforced by strict discipline: it was the only language allowed throughout the day in and out of classrooms. In theory, learning by use has always been a major feature of foreign language teaching. We teach through communication and communicate through teaching. After all, it is only common sense and proverbial wisdom: Loqui loquendo discimur, or: A force de forgeron. This point, which is a basic law in the psychology of skills, has been stressed again and again, see Eggert (1911) or Rivers (1964:104, 128).

In the practice of nineteenth- and twentieth-century schools where languages have to compete with a growing number of subjects, however, communication has too often been paid mere lip service – as has been noted by countless observers and evidenced in some empirical studies such as Mitchell et al. (1981). Two reasons for this neglect concern the special handicaps of institutionalised teaching as compared with informal learning environments:

1. Limited time factor. Time pressure may lead teachers to concern themselves too much with student mastery of the language elements – at the expense of communication.

2. Limited speaker factor. This is probably the severest handicap of classroom teaching against natural acquisition where normally one or more mature speakers are available just for one learner. The reverse is true for the classroom where one speaker is confronted with up to thirty or more learners.

How can one simultaneously converse with thirty children every one of which depends on you as the major model and source of language? This is indeed a stiff job for any teacher. Nevertheless, language teachers have developed a diversity of techniques to help them overcome the difficulties. We cannot go into these techniques here. The principle of communication
implies that whatever else the teacher does, whether he makes skillful use of the mother tongue or not, whether he explains a grammatical point or chooses to ignore it etc., he must make sure that in every lesson there are opportunities for his children to use the new language as a tool for something other than language, as a means of achieving something else and not as an end in itself (Butzkamm/Dodson 1980).

What counts is meaningful communication, and, by implication, comprehension. There is no virtue as such in guessing or in slow and laborious efforts to understand. Rather, the effort of cracking the linguistic code comes after the utterance has been understood.

5 The exploration-of-patterns hypothesis and the communicative fallacy

5.1 Transparent structures

So all we need is communication, and our language intuition will take care of the rest? While insisting on the primary importance of real language use, we claim that communication is not the whole answer, even in first language acquisition. Consciously, parents may be exclusively concerned with getting across comprehensible messages, but they achieve more: “The mother’s input and feedback is so adapted in its temporal and structural relations to filial speech that it exhibits the analytic, pattern-abstracting, word-class defining, and synthetic features that are needed to help the child analyze the regularities underlying the strings of sounds she hears”, writes Moerk (1985:265) on the basis of a re-analysis of the parent-child interactions recorded by Brown. In other words, in the mother-child dialogue children are not only helped to understand messages, but to understand structures as well.

This important distinction, i.e. the double nature of comprehension, has been obscured by Krashen’s terminology. In order for acquisition to take place, mere situational or context-bound comprehension is not enough. We must also get transparent syntactic data to work on.

I will use an example from a beginners’ class. The teacher frequently used the expression “stop talking”. The children understood the message all right. However, when I asked them after the lesson what it meant, I got answers such as „Ruhe bitte“, „leise bitte“, „ihr sollt nicht so laut sein“. In spite of the similarity between English stop and German stoppen they had not yet analyzed the construction in its constituent parts. But only if they are able to break the expression down to its parts, they can be expected to use it creatively for new expressions such as stop eating or stop working. Learners need to understand the language that is addressed to them both in situational/functional terms and in structural terms.

Likewise, tourists start communicating using formulas such as bonjour, merci, s’il vous plait. However, nothing much is gained if they keep using only unanalysed amalgams. Rote learning has to be followed by rule learning. Only through a process of detecting patterns in the input language, forming hypotheses based on these about how the language works, testing and revising them, can they acquire the language. Thus, a formula like s’il vous plait, understood both functionally and structurally, can lead to a host of familiar and novel utterances such as s’il te plait, s’il leur plait ou non, s’il ne te plait pas.

5.2 Verbal play or practice: experiments with grammar

This fact has been overlooked by all those who have been content with stressing the paramount importance of meaningful communication, leaving it to our intuitive powers to work their magic. While admitting that genuine communication is the first thing to aim for, we reject the idea that nothing but communication is called for (the communicative fallacy). A closer look at what happens in the parent—child dialogue will reveal that the child is helped in many ways in the task of inducing the subconscious assimilation of the rule. Both monolingual and bilingual children have been observed to indulge freely in what comes quite close to pattern practice. It would perhaps be more appropriate to speak here of verbal play rather than verbal practice. New, emerging skills are practised by play activity, active repetition and variation contributing to the development and consolidation of a skill. Just as children manipulate objects to find out what they can do with them, so they play around with language. Language is, then, not only a means of communication and expression, but itself the object of exploratory interest.

The reader may remember the often quoted pre-sleep monologues that Ruth Weir (1962:111) recorded of her two-and-a-half year old son Anthony over a period of two months. John Holt (1970:71 f.) has made similar observations about two-and-a-half-year-old Lisa: “Much of her talk might be called experiments with grammar, that is exercises in putting together words in the way that people around her put them together. She makes word patterns, sentences, that sound like the sentences she hears. What do they mean? Often they may not mean anything, and are not meant to mean anything. …One morning at breakfast she began to say, ‘Pass the sugar. Pass the pepper. Pass the toast. Pass the jam’. At first we passed them along. I noticed after a while that she did not use them. Often she had no use for them; what she asked for had nothing to do with what was on her plate. She would ask for milk when she already had some, or for sugar when there was nothing to put it on’.

As children play around with language, they play around with their own thinking. Thus it may well be argued that their verbal play fulfills an imaginative speech function (Corder 1973:112). It could also be seen as a process of “assimilation” in Piaget’s sense of the term, because in playing with words and ideas the child assimilates the world outside to his linguistic structures.
and incorporates (symbolically represented) reality into the structure of his mind.

5.3 Bilingual play and practice

When we turn to bilingual children, the practice-function and explorative character of children's monologues may become even more obvious. It seems that the child needs "dummy runs" where he is freed from the pressures of genuine communication. Leopold reports how Hildegard said a word several times in succession, half-loud to herself, and adds: "She is now interested in correctness of pronunciation and practice often, sometimes asking: 'is that right?'" (Leopold 1949:32). Dodson reports on the language behaviour of incipient Welsh-English bilinguals in nursery school: "The child imitates and repeats the second-language sound chains when he is playing by himself. It seems that the actual activity with other children or adults does not allow the child a large enough number of speaking and listening contacts to consolidate the language sufficiently... It is during this 'practising' that the second-language learner also permutes vocabulary and sentence elements as well as extends and adds together clauses... For example, permutation work is involved when the young second language learner, whilst playing with a series of toys, says to himself or turns to a by-stander with, 'That's mine' - 'that's Daddy's' - 'that's Mummy's', etc., and the whole activity becomes a sort of language game" (Dodson 1976, p. 7).

If older learners have not been observed to engage in language play, this may very well be because they simply practice subvocally, thus replacing the younger bilinguals' naive overt behaviour.

To sum up, the non-communicative use of language in natural acquisition situations seems to serve three functions mainly:

1. Mere repetition of words and expressions: auditory and articulatory consolidation.

2. Permutation of elements, sentence variations and extensions: experiments with structures. The child recognizes and explores productive patterns and moves away from prototypical model instances (provided in the parent–child dialogue) that probably triggered off the process of pattern recognition in the first place to less salient, less clear examples. (For the application of prototype theory to the acquisition of grammar see Berman 1985).

3. (Bilinguals only) Comparing and contrasting words and structures of two languages: contrastive analysis provided by the learner himself to clear the path for the new language (see Dodson 1985).

These findings can be seen as a vindication of standard teaching techniques/materials: 1. the use of imitation and repetition; 2. language especially contrived to assist functional and structural comprehension; 3. the exploitation of productive sentence patterns based on the generative principle so clearly set out by H. Palmer. However, in natural situations, both the message-oriented use of the language and the non-communicative, medium-oriented verbal play involve the creative use of language. I have suggested, therefore, not to reject pattern drill, but to modify it and build it into a communicative framework (Butzkamm 1989). A preoccupation with structure at the expense of meaning and purpose was and is fatal to language teaching.

6 The preferred language hypothesis

For children acquiring two languages concurrently, e.g. in linguistically mixed marriages a mother-tongue competes with a father-tongue. In all situations, one language will become dominant, especially if one of them is identical with the language spoken outside the home. Dodson (1983) introduced the term "preferred language" with a view to emphasizing the unstable nature of bilingual proficiency. The young bilingual has a preferred language (instead of a dominant or first language) and a second language for any area of experience, domain or part-domain. "This applies even within the area of a single concept, since the two languages are fused consecutively rather than simultaneously into the development process relating to the acquisition and the consolidation of the concept. The bilingual development of the individual is not necessarily a one-way process, however, since although for any area of experience for any given time the individual has a preferred and a second language, the status of these languages may be reversed at a later stage depending on the frequency, intensity and quality of subsequent interactions in either of the two languages relating to the area of experience concerned" (Dodson 1983:5). Thus, "preferred" relates to ease of use and does not denote a preference for, or desire to use one language rather than the other.

What happens when the child has already successfully conceptualized and verbalized a certain part of his world in one language and is now expected to express himself in his other language? What ways are open for the child, and what course does he normally follow? This is what Kielhöfer & Jonekeit (1983:57) observed with German-French bilinguals: "Es ist bei den Kindern jedoch zu beachten, daß sie von sich aus versuchen, Wortschatzlücken in bestimmten Bereichen einer Sprache auszufüllen. Wenn sie das französische Wort zuerst kennen, fragen sie die Mutter: Comment ça s'appelle en allemand? Wenn die Mutter die Antwort nicht geben kann oder will, erkundigen sie sich bei der nächsten Gelegenheit beim Vater. Da sie ihn nicht direkt nach der Übersetzung fragen können (er kennt das französische Wort nicht), versuchen sie eine Umschreibung mit das da, später Dings-da. Unter Umständen ist das Dings-da am Fenster ein Blumentopf. Der Vater muß dann das richtige Wort Blumentopf sagen. Oft murmeln sie dann für sich das schon bekannte französische Äquivalent pot de fleur. Das heißt, sie suchen eine Vokabelgleichung und bestätigen diese durch Wiederholung..."
The preferred-language-hypothesis, then, can be stated as follows: “The child will ask to be given the meaning in his preferred language, of any words or phrases in the second language event which he does not understand fully, if at all. He does this during the event if his playmates are also bilingual, or he waits until he has an opportunity after the event to ask other bilinguals such as his parents. The language of the enquiry itself could be either of his two languages” (Dodson 1983:5).

There are basically two different situations. In the first instance, the child learns to label an object or event for the first time and immediately inquires after its equivalent: “She now asks the eternal what-question apparently in the expectation of bilingual answers. She first asks her mother, then her father for the name of the object” (Leopold 1949:14). Here the child is quite deliberately building up a bilingual lexicon. There seems to be a strong curiosity motive behind this behaviour, and the sheer fun of articulating and gaining mastery of an ever-extending world through language. Children have even been observed practising bilingual word-pairs all by themselves (Kielhöfer/Jonekeit 1983).

Roughly the same happens when at this early stage the child echo's a new word he learns with the equivalent which is already available to him: “Translating words from one language into the other is becoming a habit. When I speak of an object in German, she repeats its name in English” (Leopold 1949:11).

The first situation-type, then, is one in which the child asks for equivalents, or supplies them himself, compares and contrasts them, and practises them. There is no communicative need to obtain or mention the equivalent. The child focuses on language. He wants to learn and finds pleasure in learning.

However, the enormous task of conceptualizing the world and verbalizing one's concepts is more important than that of linguistically duplicating the world. That is why the second type of situation where an equivalent is added at a clearly later point in time becomes more frequent as the child develops linguistically. Here is a definite communicative need. The child either does not understand and seeks clarification, or searches for words to express himself:

Frank (playing in sandpit, to father): Ich habe mein CELLAR nicht fertig. Was ist CELLAR in Deutsch?
Father: Keller
Frank: Mein Keller ist nach fertig.
(Suunders 1982:195)

In some cases the parents deliberately avoided giving the equivalent and added further explanation instead. “Often she says then the more familiar English equivalent to show that she has understood”, writes Leopold (1949:146). There seems to be a genuine urge to associate the new with the expression already available in the other language in order to ensure full understanding. “The child's need to know the equivalent at any cost is part of his job of arranging the two languages. The meanings and functions which prove to exist in both languages, thus enabling the child to make comparisons, are reinforced” (Taeschner 1983:188).

To sum up: For the developing bilingual, young or old, the natural, and also the most direct way out of a situation of non-comprehension or expressive block in his second language is to ask for an equivalent of what he has already labelled in his preferred language.

What are we to make, then, of the following teaching guideline, supposedly based on second language acquisition research: “Do not refer to a student's L1, when teaching the L2. The second language is a new and independent language system. Since successful second language learners keep their languages distinct, teachers should, too”. (Dulay, Burt & Krashen 1982:269).

How odd that these researchers should have overlooked the ways in which bilinguals use their preferred language, both to learn how to keep their two languages apart and get on with the conversation in their second language. Needless to say that the overwhelming evidence of history as well as modern classroom experiments (Dodson 1967; Butzkamm 1980:143ff.) speak to the efficacy of the mother tongue as a teaching aid. No doubt the most important means to teach a foreign language is that language itself. However, the mother-tongue can be made its most powerful ally.

7 The short-circuiting hypothesis vs. the monitor model

Krashen's (1982) acquisition – learning distinction and his monitor hypothesis have been widely discussed (see especially Digges 1983, Ellis 1986 and McLaughlin 1987). I believe the objections raised by these authors are justified. They need not be repeated here.

One point has not yet been given proper emphasis, however. Krashen's attempt to minimize the role of grammar in foreign language teaching devalues the historical experience of countless generations of language teachers. His concepts are not just counterintuitive to an overwhelming majority of intelligent practitioners aware of the choices open to them, they serenely disregard the cumulative empirical evidence of the history of foreign language teaching. Here, extremists of all sorts have had their say, and have failed. Thus, what I have called the „kollektive praktische Vernunft“ (Butzkamm 1981) has opted for the unavoidability of grammar in effective language teaching.

Krashen's acquisition – learning distinction points to a basic polarity which has appeared under many guises and in different contexts:

- implicit knowledge vs. explicit knowledge
- tacit knowledge vs. conscious knowledge
- intuition vs. insight and analogy vs. analysis (Rivers 1964)
subconscious assimilation (Palmer) vs. consciousness raising (Sharwood-Smith 1981)

intuitive heuristics (Chomsky) vs. language awareness (Hawkins 1981)

functional practice vs. formal practice

the code – communication dilemma (Howatt 1984)

dependent deception vs. intent formation

fluency vs. accuracy

natural approaches vs. rational approaches (Bruner 1984)

Relevant distinctions borrowed from other disciplines:

incidental learning vs. intentional learning

knowing how vs. knowing that

rationalistic faculties vs. rational faculties (Lorenz 1973)

procedural knowledge vs. declarative knowledge.

While familiar with these terms, we tend to ignore earlier discussions of the problem couched in terms such as Routine vs. Vernunftsschlüssel or usus vs. doctrina etc.

In the end, the upshot of all this has been that while “we ought to learn a language through sensible communications” (Jespersen 1904:11), grammar – explanations, paradigms, etc. – can, and should be a valuable teaching aid. In the beginning of the century, foreign language pedagogy, turning to the psychology of skills, borrowed the well-established construct of “mental short-circuiting” (e.g. Patterson 1932) to explain how formal practice and/or knowledge of rules turns into implicit knowledge and improves communicative performance. It is a pity that modern theorists should have ignored older solutions to the problem and overlooked what I have called the short-circuiting hypothesis (Butzkamm 1980; 1989). Conscious learning is not only available as a monitor, or editor. Grammatical insights or mother tongue equivalents, having served as an initial aid in acquisition, can be short-circuited and fused with actual performance. If we accept this, we can build grammatical props into a communicative approach. However, the problem to solve the many unsolved problems concerning language and cognition, is largely ignorant of foreign language teaching and its history. Implications for language teaching? As if someone from outside could solve our problems for us! Foreign language teaching is a discipline in its own right, with a long history of past solutions to practical problems. It too, has generated a bewildering wealth of teaching methods, techniques, and ideas. However, research on natural and formal acquisition situations, on language learning in or out of the classroom has reached a stage where variety types of acquisition can mutually elucidate each other. Concerted action will make a unified, consistent theory of language acquisition possible, sufficiently elaborate to settle some of the major long-standing issues in foreign language teaching.

Bibliography


Ray Bradbury's SF Short Story The Smile deals with a major event in the life of a little boy named Tom. In the course of a so-called hate festival, organized by the anonymous authorities in charge of a cheerless postnuclear world, he is unexpectedly confronted with one of the half-forgotten remnants of civilization: Leonardo's "Mona Lisa". The beauty of this picture and the ability of this object to recall the ancient charms and values of the past from which it came create a whole complex of emotional responses in the little boy which may perhaps be best described as epiphanies in the tradition of James Joyce. "But she's beautiful!" Tom says as he sees a piece of canvas to save it from destruction. Each of the six sections is followed by a plan that shows how the 'clues' leading up to the epiphanies and directly following it can be compiled, compared, and explained for classroom-purposes. Thus, the pupils will not only experience Bradbury's special world, "where dreams of tomorrow and memories of yesterday become parts of the same fantasy" (W.L. Johnson), but by following up various traces they will discover that the power of beauty does not only lie within the object itself but also within the mind of the beholder.


0 Spuren entdecken, Spuren lesen: "Bradbury's special world"

Oft bleibt, wenn alles vorbei ist, nur die Spur eines Lächelns – ein Verweis auf Gestern wie auf Morgen. Ray Bradbury's Short Story The Smile handelt