

Second Language Learning and Teaching

Mirosław Pawlak  
Larissa Aronin *Editors*

# Essential Topics in Applied Linguistics and Multilingualism

Studies in Honor of David Singleton

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# **Second Language Learning and Teaching**

*Series Editor*

Mirosław Pawlak

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Mirosław Pawlak · Larissa Aronin  
Editors

# Essential Topics in Applied Linguistics and Multilingualism

Studies in Honor of David Singleton

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# Preface

This volume is intended as a tribute to Professor David Singleton, a truly exceptional person in many different ways. For one thing, even a cursory look at his long list of publications testifies to the astounding breadth of his research interests, including not only those best-known, such as crosslinguistic influence, the age factor, vocabulary, or multilingualism, but also those somewhat less-known, such as syllabus and materials design, the communicative approach, the teaching of Irish, or the cultural and linguistic experiences of immigrants. It is also clear that many of his books and papers have been extremely influential or even ground-breaking, sometimes paving the way for entirely new research avenues, excellent examples being his work on the interface between age and affect or on the role of affordances in second language acquisition. However, apart from so successfully advancing his own career, David Singleton has always been concerned with the careers of others, being extremely adept in seeking out real talents and offering opportunities for them to rise and shine in the field. This support has taken the form of supervising doctoral dissertations, inviting scholars to publish their work in his highly respected series on second language acquisition with *Multilingual Matters*, agreeing to serve on editorial boards of newly launched journals, and contributing papers to those journals or different edited collections, thus immensely enhancing their scholarly value. David Singleton is also a very good friend and colleague, someone with whom we have been working, meeting at conferences, co-authoring books and papers, trying to stay in touch and simply talking about a variety of topics on different occasions. That he performs superbly in all of those capacities and the great respect that he enjoys is evident in the fact that so many distinguished scholars from around the world have so willingly agreed to contribute to this edited collection.

The book has been divided into two parts in accordance with the two leading themes in the title, each containing contributions dealing with different facets of the main theme. Part I, entitled *Essential Topics in Applied Linguistics*, brings together eight papers on teaching and learning second language skills and sub-systems, and exploring the role of individual learner differences. First, Michael Sharwood Smith focuses on the role of affect in learning a second language, adopting as a point of reference the MOGUL framework. Anna B. Cieřlicka, Roberto R. Heredia and Marc Olivares report the findings of a study which aimed to determine the effect of language dominance, salience and context on eye

movement during processing idiomatic language. The next three papers deal with the role of cognitive factors in language learning, with David Birdsong emphasizing the need to update the Critical Period Hypothesis, Carmen Muñoz exploring the relationship between aptitude and foreign language skills, and Agni Skrzypek investigating the role of phonological short-term memory in the occurrence of crosslinguistic transfer. Then, Mirosław Pawlak, Anna Mystkowska-Wiertelak and Jakub Bielak report the results of a study which examined the dynamic nature of second language learning motivation in the course of single lessons and sequences of such lessons, and Judit Navracscics, Gyula Sáry, Szilvia Bátyi and Csilla Varga tap into the attitudes to the Hungarian language and awareness of this language among different groups of learners. Finally, Joanna Nijakowska discusses the findings of a TEFL Dys Project which provides insights into the professional needs of language teachers who have to deal with dyslexia in their everyday work. Part II, *Essential Topics in Multilingualism*, includes nine papers which are also devoted to a variety of topics. It opens with a contribution by Larissa Aronin, who discusses the importance of affordances in language learning, teaching and use, focusing in particular on affordances offered by material culture. The next two papers deal with the nature of multilingualism, with Ulrike Jessner stressing the role of metalinguistic awareness in multilingual learning as well as pointing to the need to adopt a dynamic systems perspective in investigating this process, and Danuta Gabryś-Barker using written narratives to illuminate issues involved in thinking in many languages in learners who get to know those languages through formal instruction. Romana Kopečková and then Justyna Leśniewska and Ewa Witalisz report the findings of studies which examined crosslinguistic influence in young learners, the former in the case of phonology and the latter with respect to syntax, morphology and lexis. Muiris Ó Laoire, in turn, uses narratives to explore the facilitative effect of learning Irish on the acquisition of a third language, while Christina Lindqvist and Camilla Bardel investigate the influence of proficiency and typological factors on oral production in the third language. Finally, Vivian Cook makes a comparison between standard punctuation and punctuation in street signs, and Kees de Bot, in a paper that departs somewhat from the academic tone of the articles included in the collection, traces the changes in the views on the nature of the lexicon over time. We are convinced that, thanks to the themes covered, many new perspectives on many aspects of applied linguistics and multilingualism, and the excellent quality of the scholarship, the volume will be of interest to wide audiences, ranging from experts in the field to graduate and postgraduate students.

Mirosław Pawlak  
Larissa Aronin



# Contents

## Part I Essential Topics in Applied Linguistics

<b>Can you Learn to Love Grammar and so Make it Grow? On the Role of Affect in L2 Development . . . . .</b>	<b>3</b>
Michael Sharwood Smith	
<b>It's All in the Eyes: How Language Dominance, Salience, and Context Affect Eye Movements During Idiomatic Language Processing . . . . .</b>	<b>21</b>
Anna B. Cieřlicka, Roberto R. Heredia and Marc Olivares	
<b>The Critical Period Hypothesis for Second Language Acquisition: Tailoring the Coat of Many Colors . . . . .</b>	<b>43</b>
David Birdsong	
<b>The Association Between Aptitude Components and Language Skills in Young Learners . . . . .</b>	<b>51</b>
Carmen Muřoz	
<b>Cross-Linguistic Influence in L2 Writing: The Role of Short-Term Memory . . . . .</b>	<b>69</b>
Agni Skrzypek	
<b>Another Look at Temporal Variation in Language Learning Motivation: Results of a Study . . . . .</b>	<b>89</b>
Mirosław Pawlak, Anna Mystkowska-Wiertelak and Jakub Bielak	
<b>Testing Linguistic Awareness Among Learners of Hungarian . . . . .</b>	<b>111</b>
Judit Navracics, Gyula Sály, Szilvia Bátyi and Csilla Varga	
<b>Dyslexia in the European EFL Teacher Training Context . . . . .</b>	<b>129</b>
Joanna Nijakowska	

## **Part II Essential Topics in Multilingualism**

<b>The Concept of Affordances in Applied Linguistics and Multilingualism . . . . .</b>	<b>157</b>
Larissa Aronin	
<b>On Multilingual Awareness or Why the Multilingual Learner is a Specific Language Learner . . . . .</b>	<b>175</b>
Ulrike Jessner	
<b>Face to Face with One's Thoughts: On Thinking Multilingually . . . . .</b>	<b>185</b>
Danuta Gabrys-Barker	
<b>Crosslinguistic Influence in Instructed L3 Child Phonological Acquisition . . . . .</b>	<b>205</b>
Romana Kopečková	
<b>Crosslinguistic Influence and Bilingual Children's Weaker Language . . . . .</b>	<b>225</b>
Justyna Leśniewska and Ewa Witalisz	
<b>Learners' Reflections on Their Narratives on L2 and L3 Learning . . . . .</b>	<b>235</b>
Muiris Ó. Laoire	
<b>Exploring the Impact of the Proficiency and Typology Factors: Two Cases of Multilingual Learners' L3 Learning . . . . .</b>	<b>253</b>
Christina Lindqvist and Camilla Bardel	
<b>Standard Punctuation and the Punctuation of the Street . . . . .</b>	<b>267</b>
Vivian Cook	
<b>The Homunculus in the Multilingual Brain . . . . .</b>	<b>291</b>
Kees de Bot	
<b>About the Authors . . . . .</b>	<b>299</b>

**Part I**  
**Essential Topics in Applied Linguistics**

# Can you Learn to Love Grammar and so Make it Grow? On the Role of Affect in L2 Development

Michael Sharwood Smith

**Abstract** In the nineteen seventies, Burt and Dulay suggested that negative emotions might act as an input filter inhibiting grammatical development. This idea was reformulated by Krashen as the Affective Filter Hypothesis (AFH) (Krashen 1981, 1982). Educators, applied linguists and SLA researchers have all stressed the value of positive attitudes on learning success. Research on emotions and language learning has mostly focused on the lexicon, on individual styles of learning and rates of success (Dörnyei 2003; Dewaele 2005; Pavlenko 2005) rather than the acquisition of, specifically, syntax and phonology. These are areas which, unlike the lexicon, are generally held to become significantly more difficult with age (Singleton 1995 and 1999). However motivated older learners may be to develop their phonological and syntactic skills, the desired development is by no means guaranteed. How may this be explained in terms of the psycholinguistic mechanisms involved? The AFH was stated in very general terms and never really elaborated. Nevertheless, since the AFH was originally formulated, there has been a lot of research on affect in cognitive neuroscience (e.g. Damasio 1994, 1999; LeDoux 2002). To guide investigations into how affect variably influences grammatical, lexical, semantic and pragmatic growth, the AFH is in need of updating. The MOGUL framework, which takes account of recent research across a range of disciplines, will be used to elaborate it in finer detail in a first attempt to provide a better basis for empirical investigation (see also Sharwood Smith and Truscott 2013).

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# 1 Introduction

An (apparently anonymous) quotation was posted on Facebook recently which read: “If you are not willing to learn, no one can help you. If you are determined to learn, no one can stop you”. The thrust of the present discussion will be to consider the possibility that in some cases, even great determination cannot help you acquire grammar and, on the more positive side, unwillingness need not slow down or otherwise impede development while there is continued exposure to the language. The basic issue is how our emotions might influence the largely subconscious processes that guide our language learning, but especially the way in which the L2 system develops. A well-known hypothesis advanced in the nineteen seventies will be used as a way of focusing the discussion on the effect of negative emotions on the growth of L2 grammar.

In the early days of second language acquisition (SLA) studies, Marina Burt and Heidi Dulay suggested that negative emotions, such as anxiety and lack of self-confidence, might act as an input filter inhibiting grammatical growth, that is development of L2 morphology and syntax. This they called the *affective filter* (Dulay and Burt 1977). This idea was later reformulated by Stephen Krashen as the *Affective Filter Hypothesis* (AFH) which he incorporated into a more general model of SLA (Krashen 1982, 1985). Many researchers and practitioners in various related fields having to do with second language learning have all stressed the value of positive attitudes on learning success and the inhibiting effects of negative attitudes. The AFH focused on the inhibiting effects which most people would surely accept as holding for any kind of learning in general although this particular hypothesis was inhibition of a very specific type. As the field of SLA continued to establish itself as a separate area of research in the nineteen eighties, the initial focus of many researchers into L2 development was on the more purely linguistic aspects of the acquisition of morphology and syntax. Where emotional aspects of language learning did attract attention, interest was focused more on individual variation in learning success overall, and on lexical and pragmatic issues rather than on basic morphological and syntactic development.

This chapter will not attempt to provide a full review of all the many and various studies that have appeared to date in the applied linguistic, general psychological and educational literature on emotion, attitudes and motivation (e.g. Maslow 1943; Alderfer 1972; Gardner and Lambert 1972; Dörnyei and Otto 1998; Oxford and Shearin 1994; Oxford 1996; Van Lier 1996; Dörnyei 2001; Dewaele and Pavlenko 2002; Dörnyei 2003; Dewaele 2005, 2010). Instead, it will focus on the on-line psycholinguistic mechanisms involved whereby affect influences or fails to influence the shape and course of acquisition an attempt will be made to bring further conceptual clarity into this very specific aspect of an otherwise vast subject.

## 2 Emotions and Language Learning

The AFH has always remained tied specifically to linguistic development, and development particularly in a second language learning context. An Internet search through the language acquisition and language teaching literature bears testimony to the popularity of the concept of an affective filter. The filter metaphor seems to have been seized upon by many authors as a convenient term for discussing emotionally inhibiting factors in language learning. At the same time, even though the AFH was very much about grammatical growth, the discussion has not, as already suggested, led to much refinement of the hypothesis in precise psycholinguistic terms apart from the factoring out of component aspects, such as low self-esteem or negative attitudes to language learning, all themselves very general in nature and familiar from similar discussions about other kinds of learning. In other words, if the AFH has been used as a handy term for emotional problems inhibiting language learning in general, it has also seen little elaboration by researchers interested in just those areas where the hypothesis was supposed to be relevant. This may be attributed in part to the state of research into emotion at the time generally although more recently there have been interesting developments, particularly in neuroscience that may be used to refine the conceptual basis of the AFH being asked (LeDoux 1996; Lane and Nadel 2000; LeDoux 2002).

Interest in the role of emotions in learning success did give rise to Gardner and Lambert's pioneering research on motivation in language learning (Gardner and Lambert 1972). This introduced the well-known distinction between *integrative* and *instrumental motivation* and this in turn sparked a large and continuing flow of publications on various emotional issues affecting learners and users of an L2 (see, for example, Dewaele and Pavlenko 2002; Dörnyei 2003; Dewaele 2005; Pavlenko 2005). There has been one notable line of discussion in the research literature bearing on issues affecting the growth of morphosyntax; this was sparked off by John Schumann whose pioneering work on Alberto led him to propose that learners' L2 will remain in pidginized form where they perceive themselves as being socially and psychologically distant from the host society in which they are acquiring their L2. Subsequently, Schumann became interested in the neurological underpinning of this process and has published extensively on the subject (Schumann 1975, 1990; Jacobs and Schumann 1992; Pulvermüller and Schumann 1994; Schumann 1997). Schumann (1997: xv) states: "I believe that emotion underlies most, if not all cognition" and argues that "variable success in second language acquisition (SLA) is emotionally driven".

To sum up so far, with the passage of time, SLA and applied linguistics have seen a growing body of research on emotions and language learning although this has mostly focused on emotional issues relating to the lexicon, sociocultural issues and on individual styles of learning and rates of success rather than the acquisition of grammar, or more specifically, (morpho) syntax and phonology. This seems to have created a disconnect in research between grammatical development and questions of affect. Since Krashen's initial proposals, and with the exception of Schumann's

work, there also seems to have been little attempt to integrate affect within a broader psycholinguistic account except in very general terms. The conclusion must be that new developments in a range of disciplines including psycholinguistics and neurolinguistics should be taken into account to reconnect affect studies with grammatical acquisition research. This would allow an updating, and a more precise elaboration of what the AFH might entail in psycholinguistic terms. How precisely could affect influence the processing of grammatical input? Investigations can profit from a more refined and rigorous framework. Only then can our understanding of how emotions influence emerging grammars be substantially improved.

### 3 The Affective Filter Hypothesis

The *affective filter* was a term coined by Marina Burt and Heidi Dulay in (1977) to indicate reduced sensitivity to language input caused by particular emotional states such as anxiety as experienced by many second language learners. Whereas the language acquisition mechanisms were hypothesized to be identical in both young children and older learners (contra Selinker 1972), the negative impact of affective factors in second language acquisition was one clear way of differentiating the two acquisition scenarios. The basic idea was that young children typically approach language acquisition with a 'low' affective filter. In other words, they feel no inhibition, they have a positive attitude and are highly motivated. The slower progress overall of older learners and the difficulties they encounter in achieving a full mastery of an L2 may be attributed, following Burt and Dulay (1977), to the inhibiting effects of a 'high' affective filter. All the necessary information may be present in the input and the same subconscious mechanisms that allowed them to perfectly acquire their mother tongue are intact but emotions get in the way and obscure the signals in the input and make them correspondingly harder to read by the internal organiser responsible for creating new grammars. The metaphor of a filter is a useful one for expressing the basic idea although it does not bear too much scrutiny if one wants to explain more precisely how it might work.

When Burt and Dulay collaborated with Stephen Krashen to produce the first book-length exposition of a second language acquisition theory, albeit an embryonic one, the affective filter was reformulated as the Affective Filter Hypothesis (Dulay et al. 1982). It took its place along with other hypotheses to form the core of the proposed model which was later developed by Krashen in numerous publications (Krashen 1981, 1982, 1985). The usual listing of the five hypotheses is as follows with the AFH in fifth position:

1. The Acquisition-Learning Hypothesis.
2. The Monitor Hypothesis.
3. The Natural Order Hypothesis.
4. The Input Hypothesis.
5. The Affective Filter Hypothesis.