Interaction in the Language Curriculum

Awareness, Autonomy and Authenticity

Leo van Lier

Applied Linguistics and Language Study

ROUTLEDGE

Interaction in the Language Curriculum

APPLIED LINGUISTICS AND LANGUAGE STUDY

General Editor
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Author's Preface

This is a book for language educators. It is the report of an ongoing project which has been evolving for the past half dozen years or so, and to which I am continually making changes. The reader should not see it as a finished product, therefore, but rather as a snapshot of work in progress, an illustration of an open-ended process that can and should have no closure.

The book is intended as a philosophical approach to the language curriculum, as an attempt to resolve dichotomies such as knowledge and values, theory and practice, research and teaching, and an illustration of what happens when we think consistently in process rather than product terms. At the same time I have not taken any of the common meanings of terms such as theory, practice, research, curriculum, and learning as given, but tried to find new meanings for them that fit new ways of thinking, and achieve terminological integrity throughout. I have not gone far enough in all these matters, but I hope I have made some useful notes in the margin of our ideals.

I hope that the reader will find the book practical as well as theoretical, down-to-earth as well as philosophical, in fact, I hope that it will not fit in any of the usual pigeon holes. Most of all I hope that it will encourage readers to think for themselves and to construct their own lifelong project of language education. Although I have done my best to be as clear and non-technical as possible, there are places where I have felt it necessary to provide some more theoretical backup, and these sections have been set off from the main body of the text by indentation, spacing and a vertical line in the left margin. The reader is of course free to skip such passages, though I feel they are important for the argument they support.

As always, a number of people have assisted in the development of this book, first of all Chris Candlin, whose support and vision have been crucial, and secondly several generations of students at the Monterey Institute of International Studies, who must at times have wished that the AAA was out of the way and done with. Well, it is out of the way now, though I hope it is not quite yet done with. Even so, several of them generously read parts of earlier incarnations and made useful comments. I would particularly like to thank Kim Marie Cole, Eve Connell (who also transcribed some of the classroom data), Paul Magnuson, Stephanie Stauffer, Troy Titterington, and Carol Woods.

Conversations with several colleagues, especially Kathi Bailey, Josep María Cots, Rod Ellis, Celia Roberts, and Ruth Larimer, have also helped to clarify many points, though I may have failed to profit fully from all their suggestions.

Aída, Jan and Marcus will be almost as pleased as I am that the book is finally finished. My thanks to them for their support and patience.

Was der Leser auch kann, das überlass dem Leser. (What the reader can do, leave that to the reader.)

(Ludwig Wittgenstein, 1980b:77, *Vermischte Bemerkungen*. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp)

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Transcription conventions:

T	Teacher (unless otherwise noted)
L, L1, L2, etc.	Individual learners, unless name is given
LL	Several learners together
...	A pause of roughly one second; different numbers of dots indicate shorter or longer pauses
?	rising intonation on the preceding segment
so:::	colons indicate lengthening of the preceding sound
(who)	single brackets indicate unclear or probable item
((laughter))	double brackets indicate comment on transcript or context
[hm . .	superscripted square bracket indicates onset of overlap or back channel
[si:m]	square brackets indicate phonetic transcription or approximation
=	indicates a turn which continues below, at the next = symbol; usually the intervening line contains brief back channels or comments.

1 The AAA curriculum

Introduction

The curriculum outlined in this book grew out of an action research project I conducted a few years ago. The project started when, after having taught linguistics and second language acquisition to graduate students for a number of years, a nagging concern could no longer be put aside. This concern is probably quite familiar to most fellow-teacher educators, since it relates to a central problem in graduate programs: the relationship (or lack thereof) between theoretical course content and the practical issues and exigencies of everyday language teaching. Teachers often ask: 'How does this relate to classroom teaching?' and: 'What's the use of all this theory?' Sometimes an answer may be available, other times we may have to reply with an evasive: 'Theoretical knowledge is part of being a professional teacher.' The latter sounds a bit like 'We know what's good for you,' an admonition which, in my experience as a parent, is not terribly effective.

The action research project consisted of teaching a beginning ESL grammar class[1] in order to investigate the following question:

> *Standing with both feet firmly planted on the classroom floor, what are the theoretical issues in linguistics, education, and other fields, that are relevant, here and now, to the teaching job and the learning job?*

Since I was also teaching introductory linguistics and second language acquisition at that time, I consciously tried to investigate the issue of relevance in both directions:

(a) What part of the academic content matter is relevant to the ESL class?
(b) What part of the ESL class is relevant to the academic content matter?

In some ways the research was a failure. I found that, in the midst of the complex demands of classroom practice, I had little time to worry about, say, universal grammar, parameter setting, or the interface hypothesis. In that sense, SLA researchers and other theoreticians are surely correct when they say that much of their work may not have direct pedagogical implications or applications. Does that mean that such kinds of research

and theories can be ignored by language teaching practitioners? I would, most emphatically, reject such a conclusion as being extremely short-sighted. I agree with Halliday, when he says:

> . . . we should beware of thinking that every subject exists simply to serve the needs of education. There is a tendency for educators to demand an immediate pay-off: if we can't apply these ideas directly here and now in our teaching, then we don't want anything to do with them. This attitude passes for a healthy pragmatism: we're practical people with a job to do, no time for the frills. In fact it is simply mental laziness – a refusal to inquire into things that may not have any immediate and obvious applications, but which for this very reason may have a deeper significance in the long run. Most of linguistics is not classroom stuff; but it is there behind the lines, underlying our classroom practices, and our ideas about children, and about learning and reality. (Halliday 1982: 15)

Teachers who hope, in these pages, to find advocacy for omitting various theories of SLA, linguistics, or education (among others) from graduate programs or inservice courses, will be disappointed. There are many important ways in which theoretical knowledge can be useful other than those dictated by immediate applicability. I cannot specify these ways in a general sense, since I believe that every professional must labor to discover such relevance. My action research did not yield any direct clues, but that does not mean much. Intangibles are often more influential than tangibles. If you can't see it, that doesn't mean it isn't there. If you can't count it, that doesn't mean it doesn't count.

However, there are some ways in which my action research did turn up fruitful results. Several avenues of research became prominent that had hitherto rather taken a back seat in my teacher development activities, as I expect they have in the work of others as well. These avenues, pointing to such concepts as awareness, attention, intrinsic motivation, self-regulation, and pedagogical (inter)action, gradually suggested the outlines of a way of theorizing, from the perspective of the language classroom, that deserved to be brought into focus as a guiding metaphor for practicing teachers. Once in focus, and in progress, this way of theorizing itself may lead to a need to become familiar with less immediately applicable theories in cognitive science, linguistics, and other areas. What the work presented here aims to do, in other words, is to put the horse of professional awareness before the cart of theoretical subject matter.

The ideas put forward in this book are not intended as a theory, in the sense of an organized body of knowledge, or a depository of research findings and hypotheses. Rather, the book treats theory, research, and practice as an essential unity in the process of doing curriculum (there should be a verb associated with curriculum: 'curriculizing,' perhaps).

Theorizing, researching, and practicing are thus inseparable ingredients in the professional conduct of a language educator. Rather than speaking of a new theory, or a new approach or method, I will use the term *language education curriculum*, defining curriculum in a *holistic* and *process* sense. It is holistic in the sense that every part and every action must be motivated by and understood in relation to all other parts and actions, in an integrative way; it is process-oriented in the sense that pedagogical interaction is motivated by our understanding of learning rather than by a list of desired competencies, test scores, or other products. The setting of goals and objectives, and the construction and assessment of achievement, are themselves integral parts of the curriculum process, rather than pre-established constraints that are imposed on it from the outside.

Lawrence Stenhouse once said that the curriculum has to be brought into the room 'on a porter's barrow' (Rudduck & Hopkins 1985: 67). A curriculum, in this view, is a systematic collection of accumulated knowledge and experience, from a multitude of sources, that guides classroom practice. Stenhouse envisaged that the porter's barrow contained boxes of books, collections of charts and pictures, films and tapes, and so on.

The language curriculum that I will conceptualize in this book is, like Stenhouse's example, drawn from a variety of disciplines and classroom worlds. This does not mean that it is a collection of objects to be delivered to educational recipients, but rather a process of assisting learning informed by a background of knowledge and experience which I try to make as rich and varied as I can. Let me just briefly sketch the main ingredients (without going into detail just yet), so that the reader will know where we are going.[2] In the pages that follow I will address the following points, which will be elaborated in detail in subsequent chapters:

1. three foundational principles
2. relationships between theory, research, and practice
3. theory of learning
4. theory of curriculum and instruction
5. the centrality of interaction

> The curriculum is based on a triad of foundational principles or 'constants' which themselves cannot be further reduced or grounded, since they constitute what I consider essential properties of the educational enterprise. These principles, *awareness*, *autonomy*, and *authenticity*, or AAA for short, are amalgams of knowledge and values, or in other words, they are a unity of epistemological and axiological beliefs. Although I would not wish to claim that they are universal, valid for everyone in any cultural or temporal context, they represent, I suggest, a fair consensus of our current intellectual knowledge and moral aspirations as language educators. However, rather than

suggesting that all readers adopt my principles as a canon for the construction of their own curriculum, I suggest that they be used as merely an example for the construction of one's own set of foundational principles. The first and most crucial step of developing a curriculum is the articulation of the knowledge and values upon which it is founded. And in order to avoid the seductive comfort of fads and bandwagons, it is preferable to articulate one's own principles than to take over someone else's uncritically.

I have modeled my foundational principles on the Peircean concepts of firstness, secondness, and thirdness, together forming what he called a *genuine triad*, in which each member can only be explained in relation to the other two. These connections will be discussed in a number of places in the book. Since they are based not only on what we know – or think we know – about the nature of language learning, but also on the ethical basis, the *purpose* of our work, the AAA curriculum cannot be the application of rational or utilitarian strategies or techniques to achieve predetermined outcomes or objectives. Instead, it has to grow from an understanding of our learners and what they want to achieve.

Next, the concepts of theory, practice, and research, and their dynamic interrelationships, are reexamined, redefined, and reconstructed to allow for the development of an *educational theory of practice*, taking guidance from the work of Bourdieu, Freire, Foucault, inter alia. Notions such as action research, teacher research, and pedagogical thoughtfulness, familiar to many educators from the work of Lawrence Stenhouse, Stephen Kemmis, Ken Zeichner, Max van Manen, and many others, are anchored in and motivated by this theory of practice, and are therefore integral to the language curriculum and to teacher development for the language curriculum.

As mentioned above, any curriculum must be based on our knowledge of the learning process and the learning context, as well as on our values and purposes (including those of the teacher, student, parent, and any other stakeholder). The key to responsible (and effective) pedagogical interaction is *understanding the learner* (which includes understanding learning), and a theory of learning is therefore needed to underpin the development of strategies for pedagogical interaction. The theory of learning which informs the AAA curriculum is based on the developmental psychology of Vygotsky, in which social interaction is seen as the key to learning, and in which language and cognition are interdependent processes. Vygotsky's central notion of the zone of proximal development (ZPD) can be profitably related to Bruner's process of scaffolding, as well as to Piaget's 'grasp of consciousness,' and the growth of self-determination underlying work on intrinsic motivation by Deci and colleagues, on achievement motivation by Heckhausen and others, and autotelic learning as described by Csikszentmihalyi.

Finally, the importance of interaction in language education cannot just be taken for granted, but the interaction itself must be meticulously described and understood. For one thing, there are many ways of interacting, and it is safe to assume that some will be more beneficial to learning than others. Furthermore, the relations between wider social processes and conditions (such as power and control) and social interaction for learning need to be investigated. Thirdly, interpersonal language use must work in tandem with innately constrained processes of language development which, though they are as yet ill understood, undoubtedly exert a strong influence on all social and academic development.

> For these reasons, as well as for others which will undoubtedly come to light, interaction is the most important element of the curriculum, and this is manifested in several different ways. First of all, the study of interaction is a major focus of teacher research, as well as a key element in teacher development. That is, improvements and innovations in professional practices require a close monitoring of interactional work and systematic attempts at changing it in desired directions. For this research, conversation analysis and the microsociological work of Goffman provide crucial tools and insights. Secondly, learning tasks must be designed so as to promote the types of interaction which our research identifies as providing optimal opportunities for learning. Thirdly, and perhaps most importantly, the concept of interaction itself – in all its manifestations – must be illuminated so as to avoid a narrow definition leading to superficial communication or even pseudo-communication.

The three foundational principles: *Awareness*, *Autonomy*, and *Authenticity*, or AAA for short,[3] allow language education to unfold in a regulated yet creative manner, within a framework of individual and social *constraints* and *resources*. Unlike most curricula and learning theories, the AAA curriculum is explicitly grounded not only in knowledge but in human values as well. The general curricular framework that is drawn up on this basis can, like any other, be realized in a wide variety of practical *syllabuses*, by which I mean flexible specifications and provisions of means for instructional action. Although this book is concerned with the curriculum rather than any specific syllabus, practical examples of and suggestions for classroom work will be given throughout the book. Indeed, this is inevitable since I set out to construct a language curriculum *based on classroom experience*, although bearing in mind the many relations that exist between the classroom and the wider social and political context.

The AAA curriculum presented in this book is relevant to all branches of language education, native language (e.g. literacy, grammar composition), second language, and foreign language. In addition, it makes specific proposals for a language policy *across the curriculum*. However, given my own interests and experiences as an educational linguist and a teacher educator, most classroom illustrations are taken from second and foreign language classrooms, and classrooms with language minority students. In spite of that explicit bias, I try to ensure that it will be possible for language educators in other areas to see the relevance of all the points under discussion. My aim is to draw together what all language educators share in terms of professional concerns and options, regardless of the many differences which make every setting, classroom, and pedagogical encounter unique.

It will not take the reader long to realize that most, if not all, of the ideas put forward in the coming chapters are familiar to the professional

educator in one form or another. I do not pretend to have discovered any new educational or pedagogical facts or concepts. What I plan to do is to go on a new journey through a well-known and well-traveled landscape, plotting my own map as I travel, while consulting all the other maps that already exist. The journey will show language education in a new light, even though its components, if inspected one by one, may reveal things we have always known.

The purpose of a curriculum is to guide the processes of teaching and learning. It can do this in quite explicit, controlling ways, or in more subtle, flexible ways. In the former case, external control may cause curriculum and pedagogical needs to drift apart, and a situation similar to Peddiwell's 'saber-tooth curriculum' (1939) arises. In this satirical tale of Paleolithic times, the curriculum consisted of 'tiger-scaring, fish-grabbing, and horse-clubbing,' skills that were essential for survival in those days. However, Paleolithic pedagogues continued to teach these skills even when, due to various environmental changes, there were no more tigers to scare, no fish to grab, and no woolly horses to club. In that changed situation, when a radical suggested that antelope-snaring should replace the now obsolete horse-clubbing, the wise old men said, smiling most kindly:

> We don't teach horse-clubbing to club horses; we teach it to develop a generalized strength in the learner which he can never get from so prosaic and specialized a thing as antelope-snare-setting. (Peddiwell 1939: 43)

This argument, of course, reminds us of such present-day conundrums as the wisdom or folly of allowing calculators in math lessons, spelling and grammar checkers on computers, or the utility of grammar diagrams in English lessons (though, so far as I know, sentence-diagramming has never been quite as essential for survival as fish-grabbing may once have been). More especially, the 'saber-tooth' example should warn against the current fashion of competency-based curricula, in which techniques equal capacity.

The curriculum proposed in this book will, I hope, fare better than the 'saber-tooth' curriculum, because it addresses basic human principles of language education that remain constant however much the practical demands of language use may change. This is so because they are not simply based on particular pieces of content, but rather on what, to the best of our current knowledge, we know about learning, and even more importantly, what we (and I hope I am right in assuming a high degree of consensus here!) agree are basic human values we wish to strive for.

The book is planned in the following way. First, in the remainder of this chapter, I define the basic concepts that recur as underlying themes

throughout the book, terms such as *principle*, *choice*, *curriculum*, *constraints*, and *resources*. In the second chapter I look at the relationships between theory, research and practice, and propose a new way of theorizing: the *theory of practice*, based on the work of the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu. Chapters 3–6 address the *learning theory* that supports the AAA curriculum. Particularly important notions that will be explored are language awareness, motivation and authenticity. In the next section of the book, in chapters 7 and 8, the interaction in classrooms will be examined in detail. The constructs of *contingency* and *scaffolding* form the basic phenomenological core of the AAA curriculum, since they open up the processes of learning as they occur between teachers and students in the classroom. Finally, chapter 9 suggests how teacher research and professional development that is compatible with the AAA curriculum can be carried out.

Strategies and prescriptions

According to Widdowson (1990: 7), 'language teaching can be seen as a principled problem-solving activity: a kind of operational research which works out solutions to its own local problems.' The primary researchers in this endeavor are, it seems reasonable to propose, the teachers. Since they do not work in a vacuum, teachers are in different ways assisted in their operational research of finding solutions to problems. In some cases, this assistance is voluntarily chosen or secured by the teacher him or herself. In other cases, however, the assistance is provided – or imposed – by agencies (political, institutional, social, commercial, etc.) that have a stake in the teaching/learning process, and therefore may exert some form of control. This control may be manifested in a number of different ways, some overt and visible, others tacit and invisible.

We should note that in the above paragraph I used the words *assistance* and *control*, suggesting that there is perhaps some connection between these two terms, even though in some ways they would seem to be contradictory. The reader may reflect on this, and consider how in certain circumstances, in fact in many different ways, *helping* and *controlling* might be one and the same thing. Let us elaborate a little on this idea.

It is clear that a teacher's job is made easier by such auxiliary packages as curricular frameworks produced by education agencies, textbook series, and resource books of strategies and techniques. At the same time, however, these auxiliary packages exert influence over what is actually done in the classroom, sometimes so much so that they appear to be obstacles rather than facilitators. It is useful to keep in mind the intricate interplay between controlling and helping or, to use Giddens' (1984)

terminology, between *constraints* and *resources,* since it is a theme that will recur frequently in this book. We might compare the dynamism of constraints and resources with the rules of a game: the rules of chess say that you can only move a knight in such and such a way, and a bishop in other specific ways. This certainly constrains you as a player, it means that you cannot do what you want, at least not if you want to remain inside the game. However, this very rigidity in the rules allows the game to take place at all, so that we must draw the conclusion that constraints and resources depend on each other, and the game depends on both of them in equal measure.

Just like the chess game, the educational 'game' must also be a dynamic interplay between constraints and resources. If there is excessive control, and we are told exactly what to do and when to do it, then education ceases to be education. If, on the other hand, we reject all constraints, then education will likewise be impossible, since it will degenerate into chaos. A key issue for teacher research is to distinguish between constraints intrinsic to the teaching/learning setting, and artificial constraints which a particular system or institution enforces on the teaching/learning setting. The former are true constraints which, in Giddens's sense, *direct* activities, and are empowering, the latter merely *control*, and are disempowering. An excess of artificial constraints may make teachers feel that their authority is being eroded.

The process curriculum consists of exploring, articulating, examining, and developing the constraints and resources in the educational setting, from the perspective of clear principles which guide the search, or rather, the research. This moves the process curriculum one step beyond Widdowson's problem-solving research. We are not just interested in finding our problems and then finding ways of solving them one after the other, rather, we move beyond problem-solving to problem-*posing*, in the sense advocated by Paulo Freire and other critical educators. We critically examine our educational reality and, keeping our principles firmly in mind, we determine what constraints and resources exist in the setting, and are then able to develop strategies for action.[4]

The teacher does not enter the classroom with an empty head and an empty bag. Teaching and learning materials are necessary, and planning lessons is an indispensable aspect of the teacher's craft (although learners can share in the responsibility of both the collection of materials and the planning of lessons, as I shall illustrate in later chapters). As true professionals, teachers articulate their principles so that they can make *principled choices* in their lessons. In addition, *reflection* on the classroom problems and processes that they encounter every day allow them to develop *pedagogical tact* (van Manen 1991) in dealing with the constant

unpredictable challenges of teaching. If, as I shall argue later in this book, successful teaching is a blend of planning and improvization, teachers must develop the ability to make principled decisions and choices in a wide range of pedagogical activities, ranging from the choice of materials to the conduct of activities in lessons. By the same token, they must be held *responsible* and *accountable* for those choices, and this has wide-ranging implications for teacher education.

The AAA curriculum wants to open up the choices for teachers and students by explicitly formulating educational principles (the *sine qua non* being that the AAA principles are universally acceptable), and proposing strategies for putting those principles into practice. It rejects narrowing down the options by prescribing techniques or specifying solutions. The curriculum is designed to be a *liberating* force, encouraging every teacher to create his or her own theory of practice. I have tried to keep the book readable and relatively jargon-free, although the reader may encounter passages that are dense and complex. At such times I have found it necessary to establish solid theoretical foundations and cross-disciplinary connections to avoid possible charges of scientific tourism. The reader is of course free to skip such passages.

I now turn to a preliminary discussion of the basic constructs underlying the AAA curriculum, beginning with the basic pedagogical values expressed in the three principles I have proposed.

Principles

Where do principles come from? In the imperfect world in which we live, they may come from many quarters, and they are not always the sorts of principles that can provide lasting guidance for our actions. In the first place, surrogate principles may be derived from packaged solutions offered in inservice courses and workshops: the standardized lesson format, the golden rules neatly laid out and listed, the handbook which claims to hold all the solutions, the fail-safe and foolproof recipes, in short, all the one-size-fits-all gimmicks and fads promoted by often well-meaning educationists and writers. There is much advice around that is not useful, though we may not find today the kind of convenient culprit H.L. Mencken found in Teachers College Columbia, which in 1940 he accused of having 'done more harm in the United States than any other educational agency, save maybe the public schools.' He continued:

> It has been dominated by quacks since the beginning, and their quackeries are now in full blast everywhere. They have not only seized the public schools, but nearly all the private schools. The man primarily responsible is probably John Dewey, though he doesn't go the whole way with the rest of the brethren. (quoted in Westbrook 1991: 501)

It appears that dissatisfaction with educational policies is nothing new!

A second source of principles is institutionalized demands, embodied in tests and quantified levels, generalized hierarchies of success, ladders of achievement, profiles of outcomes and lists of competencies, do-as-you're-told measurements of professional adequacy and in general the bureaucratic accountability which always threatens to take over when true principles are in decline. Thirdly, principles may be extrapolated from research and theories in the making: promising but unconfirmed directions suggested by unfinished but hastily applied fragments of scientific work (the latest fashion), or untested transfers from one world to another, such as skills from industry to education.

What alternatives do teachers have to such suspect sources of principles to guide their professional conduct? To find an answer, or to at least find the beginnings of a new direction, I propose to link the basic *epistemological* questions of language learning (the knowledge base of our field) to the axiological or ethical issues which I believe concern most dedicated teachers (our *values*). This joint consideration of knowledge and values in the profession of language learning leads me to propose three foundational principles to form the basis of the language curriculum I will explore in this book. These principles are as follows:

- Awareness
- Autonomy
- Authenticity

For preliminary guidance I present these three principles with some of their epistemological and axiological arguments (or maxims) in the form of a grid (see Figure 1), with the understanding that subsequent chapters will elaborate on these and related aspects of language learning and teaching.

These principles and their maxims will form the basis of the curriculum discussed in this book. To provide an overview I will now briefly discuss each principle in turn, reminding the reader that they will be discussed again in depth in chapters 4–6. From the start I want to emphasize that the principles, though they are here examined one at a time, only make sense as a unity. Each one can only be understood in relation to the other two.

Awareness

It is an ancient principle of learning that all new learning will be impossible unless it can be related to existing knowledge (some of it innate, probably) and experience. To illustrate this, here is a story that I

	Epistemology	Axiology
Awareness	• focusing attention • role of perception	• know what you are doing, and why • conscious engagement • reflection
Autonomy	• self-regulation • motivation • depth of processing	• responsibility • accountability • free choice • democratic education
Authenticity	• language use in life • relevance • communication	• commitment to learning • integrity • respect

Figure 1 Principles of the curriculum

remember from my first psychology course many years ago, and which is perhaps apocryphal.

A stone-age man from New Guinea was taken to a big city by anthropologists who wished to study his reactions to modern civilization. All day they drove him around in a taxi, showing skyscrapers, big stores, busy streets, buses, railways, bridges, and so on. At the end of the day they asked him to tell them what he had seen. He replied that he had been amazed by the strength of a skinny old mule he had seen pulling a cart piled high with all sorts of junk. They asked him what else he had seen. Nothing. The skinny old mule was the only thing he had seen, he simply could not comment on anything else.

To learn something new one must first notice it. This noticing is an awareness of its existence, obtained and enhanced by paying attention to it. Paying attention is focusing one's consciousness, or pointing one's perceptual powers in the right direction, and making mental 'energy' available for processing. Processing involves linking something that is perceived in the outside world to structures (patterns of connections) that exist in the mind. Our 'savage' could not notice things that were totally unfamiliar, because he had no knowledge or experience which could help him to point his attention in the right direction.

We don't know exactly what it is we have to notice in order to learn language. It is likely that there are many different kinds of learning involved. For example, learning the meaning of a word may be an entirely different learning process than learning its pronunciation, or its syntactic properties (see Levelt 1989, particularly chapter 6, on the structure of lexical items). We therefore have to attend to different kinds

of things and in different ways, depending on the precise job of learning before us. Slobin's *operating principles* address various aspects of the child's awareness in acquiring the first language, such as the tendency to pay attention to the ends of words (Slobin 1985). Such principles of awareness and attention, and in general the reciprocal relations between an individual and the language-using world, can be fruitfully studied from the ecological perspective of J.J. Gibson (1979; see also E.J. Gibson 1991; Forrester 1992). What is generally known now by the mechanistic information-processing term *input*, becomes *affordance*, that which is offered by the linguistic environment and perceived by the learner, thus emphasizing complementarity and promising a resolution of the object/subject dichotomy (E.J. Gibson 1991: 559). The kinds of things that may guide – or encourage – appropriate attention-paying, in other words the cultivation of affordances, in second language learning and in language learning in general, form part of the topic of this book.

Language awareness, whether deliberate or spontaneous, is thus a crucial aspect of language learning, both first and subsequent. In addition, educational settings require awareness of learning strategies and processes, social awareness of classroom structures, awareness of learning and teaching styles, and so on. These various aspects of awareness will be discussed in more detail in later chapters.

Autonomy

It is a truism that learning has to be done by the learner. This means that teaching cannot cause or force learning, at best it can *encourage* and *guide* learning. The impetus for learning must come from the learner, who must *want* to learn, either because of a natural human propensity to do so, or because of an interest in the material. It is interesting to consider a comment on this by Chomsky (who does not normally venture into pedagogical territory), in response to a question on the utility of recent findings in linguistics for language teaching:

> The truth of the matter is that about 99 percent of teaching is making the students feel interested in the material. Then the other 1 percent has to do with your methods. And that's not just true of languages. It's true of every subject. (Chomsky 1988: 181)

Two features are central to autonomy: *choice* and *responsibility*. If the learner is merely a passive recipient of instruction, the attention-paying mentioned above will be weak and unfocused. Moreover, most learning, especially complex learning, requires high and sustained cognitive effort, 'the investment of deliberately initiated thought' (Sullivan & Conway 1989), and this is determined by the degree of positive affect assigned to

the activity. And positive affect derives partly from feelings of control, ownership, and competence (aspects of the 'autotelic,' or self-regulating personality described in Csikszentmihalyi 1990; cf. also the importance of self-regulation in the study of metacognition, e.g. Weinert & Kluwe 1987, and most of all, of course, in the work of Vygotsky 1978).

The autonomous learner must be able to make significant decisions about what is to be learned, as well as how and when to do it. Further, the autonomous learner is responsible for learning as well as lack of learning, so long as adequate opportunities are available in the setting. There is now a significant body of research literature about autonomy in learning and other social activities, starting with the work of Vygotsky, Piaget and Bruner, and continuing with Deci and Ryan's intrinsic motivation and causality orientations (1985), and so on. This work will be reviewed in subsequent chapters, especially chapter 5.

Authenticity

The third member of the AAA principles is *authenticity*. In the language learning literature this usually refers to the materials that are used (the *texts*). Texts (including pictures, realia, etc.) are authentic when they are not especially written or prepared for the language learner, but rather taken from the world at large. Newspaper articles, novels, poems, TV soap opera episodes, commercials, paintings by van Gogh, and so on, are all authentic in this definition, whereas dialogs, exercises, reading texts, illustrations, and so on, written to be included in language textbooks, are not.

In this book, however, authenticity is approached from a different angle. I take as my starting point the existentialist definition of *authentic*: an action is authentic when it realizes a free choice and is an expression of what a person genuinely feels and believes. An authentic action is *intrinsically motivated*. Inauthentic actions, on the other hand, are undertaken because everyone else is doing them, they 'ought' to be done, or in general they are motivated by external forces.

Authenticity, in this all-encompassing sense, is very closely related both to awareness and to autonomy. It is at the same time the *result* and the *origin* of awareness and autonomy. How is such a seemingly contradictory relationship possible? To understand this, we need to go all the way back to Kant's categories, in which the third category in a class 'arises from the combination of the second with the first' (Kant 1934: 82) and to Peirce's transformation of these in his notions of 'firstness, secondness, and thirdness,' roughly equivalent to *object* (e.g. the language itself), *action* (or engagement with the language, e.g. through

interaction), and *interpretation* (success and understanding).[5] The AAA principles thus form a genuine Peircean triad, in which each member cannot be conceptualized without the other two. To take the notion of authenticity from such philosophical underpinnings to the practical applications in language classrooms, is the topic of chapter 6.

. . . and Achievement

I have used the AAA as guiding principles in my own work for a number of years now, and from time to time people suggest perfectly reasonable candidates for further principles, or 'a fourth A.' These have included such notions as accountability, assessment, and achievement (note the uncanny coincidence that they all start with A as well!). I continue to resist such additions, and my stubborn decision to stick to the triad as a basic unifying construct may strike some as a rather peculiar numerological (or even pseudo-religious!) fixation on the number three. However, I would like to advance a less esoteric reason, namely that I wish to guard against proliferation of categories by preserving the notion of the triad as a structuring system.

On the other hand, the basic triad of the AAA is of little use unless it is structurally and functionally connected to other phenomena in learners' education and social life. In this sense suggestions to add other principles indicate an existing problem and therefore need to be taken into account. The way I propose to do this is briefly outlined in this section.

The three principles of awareness, autonomy, and authenticity refer basically to personal (or, to be precise, *intra*personal) properties relating to a person's motivations, aspirations, actions, and development. While I regard these as appropriately central, it is clear that personal development is intricately bound up with interpersonal issues. Indeed, the dynamic intertwining of the intrapersonal and the interpersonal is one of the focal concerns of Vygotskyan developmental psychology, and in later chapters this dynamism will be explored in a variety of directions. For now, I propose a formal link between the foundational principles outlined above, or the *primary* AAA, as we might call them, and a *secondary*, or subsidiary triad, which links the former to the social, interpersonal world.

The second triad consists of the three concepts of *achievement*, *assessment*, and *accountability*, or *knowledge* of success (and for success read also progress, competence, proficiency, etc.), *demonstration* of success, and *justification* of pedagogical action. What 'counts as' success is determined by a host of factors, historical, social, cultural, genetic, and so on,