1987

Second Language Acquisition in the Field: A Personal Experience

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A Personal Experience

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MAT XVII

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Arts in Teaching degree at the School for International Training, Brattleboro, Vermont.

August 1987

This project by Mary Chase Dindorf is accepted in its present form.

Date September 1, 1987

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Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Diane Larsen-Freeman, my adviser, and John Schumann, my reader, for all of their help, suggestions and encouragement. I would also like to thank my husband, Eko, for his encouragement, patience and for introducing me to the language and culture I have grown to love.

Terima kasih banyak untuk keluarga saya di Amerika dan semua keluarga di Indonesia untuk segala-galanya.

ABSTRACT

This report is an examination of the results of my own beginning second language acquisition in the field. For one year I observed myself in the process of acquiring Bahasa Malaysia and Bahasa Indonesia in the respective countries. I was able to document my experiences in a language acquisition diary. It is the data from which this report was written.

I found that my second language acquisition in the field is a complex process determined by need as well as preferred personal strategies, and limited by a saturation monitor. The success of this acquisition depends primarily upon my needs as well as attitudes towards the target language group. I found that attitude affects motivation, which in turn affects acquisition itself. If my perceptions towards the target culture were positive, I tended to acquire more easily. If my perceptions were negative, I tended to reject both the culture and the language. However, if I had a need to learn and use language for communication, I tended to do so regardless of my attitudes. The function of the saturation monitor was to limit the amount of language I was internalizing at any one moment. It was influenced by time, circumstance, and interference from other languages.

In this paper, I explore my personal acquisition strategies as well as the personal and environmental factors which influence them. In addition, I will compare my findings with John Schumann's acculturation model.

ERIC Descriptors

LANGUAGE ATTITUDES MAR. 1976

CIJE: 498 RIE: 482 GC: 450

SN Reactions, beliefs or values about language and language use
BT Attitudes
RT Language
Social attitudes
Sociolinguistics

LANGUAGE RESEARCH JUL. 1966

CIJE: 2792 RIE: 3262 GC: 810

SN Study of the acquisition of spoken/written language
BT Research
RT Languages

SOCIAL ATTITUDES JUL. 1966

CIJE: 1977 RIE: 1498 GC: 510

SN Attitudes of individuals or groups with respect to social objects or phenomena such as persons, races, institutions or traits
BT Attitudes
RT Language Attitudes

INDONESIAN JUL. 1966

CIJE: 20 RIE: 46 GC: 440

UF Bahasa Indonesia
BT Indonesian languages

MALAY JUL. 1966

CIJE: 3 RIE: 4 GC: 440

BT Indonesian languages

DIARIES AUG. 1968

CIJE: 93 RIE: 85 GC: 430

SN Records, written daily or at frequent intervals of the experiences, observations, attitudes, etc. of their authors

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Introduction

This report is an examination of the results of my own beginning second language acquisition in the field. For one year I observed myself in the process of acquiring Bahasa Malaysia and Bahasa Indonesia in the respective countries. In this paper I will examine my acquisition process and the various factors which affected it based on an analysis of my experience.

To document my acquisition, I kept a language acquisition diary. My original objective for the diary study was to discover acquisition patterns for field acquisition, with the hope that these might lead to implications for classroom teaching. I found that I developed two different processes for acquisition based on need and influenced by attitude. These acquisition processes did emerge through the diary. Contrary to my original objective, however, I do not feel that these results can be applied to all learners in a language classroom.

The purpose of this paper, then, is to document and explore my own acquisition strategy. There may be as many strategies as there are acquirers. The value of such an individualized study is simply in its contribution to the mosaic of known acquisition styles.

The paper has been organized into four chapters

beginning with Chapter I: The Project Context. My intention in this chapter is to provide the background information necessary to understand the context for the project and the research methods used.

In Chapter II: The Language Acquisition Environments, my focus is on Malaysia and Indonesia as environments for learning. I found that the success of my second language acquisition in the field is influenced by my perceptions and attitudes towards the target language and culture. For this reason, a description of the two languages and a detailed exploration of these environments as I experienced them will be included.

Chapter III: The Analysis of My Acquisition is an explanation of my own acquisition strategies. I found that, for me, second language acquisition in the field is divided into receptive acquisition of peripheral input, which is available input at the edge of one's awareness, and active pursuit of needed language. The ultimate success of both is influenced by the acquirer's attitudes towards the target language and culture. In addition, whether my acquisition is receptive or active, it is also subjected to one final filtering through a 'saturation monitor'. This is a protective device used to limit input. My acquisition strategies and my saturation monitor will be explored in detail in this chapter.

In Chapter IV: The Conclusion, I will further examine my acquisition strategies and the factors which influence them.

I found that both the saturation monitor, and the success of of my strategy of actively pursuing needed language regardless of attitudes, appear to be new in the field. In particular, I will explore the latter in its relation to John Schumann's acculturation model.[1]

The conclusions drawn in this paper are about myself and my experiences. The language acquisition processes and the variables which influence them are the result of careful introspection. I have acted as both the ethnographer and the subject of the ethnography. In this respect, the validity of such a project may be questionable to some researchers. However, because so many of the personal variables affecting second language acquisition appear to be idiosyncratic,[2] I feel that it is the individual who can best explain his or her experience. It is my belief, too, that this type of study contributes to the field by adding one more perspective on the mysterious process of second language acquisition.

[1] John H. Schumann, "The Acculturation Model for Second Language Acquisition," In Second Language Acquisition and Foreign Language Teaching, ed. R. Gingras, (Washington, D.C.: Center for Applied Linguistics, 1978).

[2] Rebecca A.Jones, "Psychological, Social, and Personal Factors in Second Language Acquisition." Masters Thesis. UCLA, 1977, p.15.

Chapter I: The Project Context

My intention in this chapter is to provide the reader with background information about myself as a learner, and the project. Included in this section is the rationale for the project, the learner's previous second language experiences (both with other languages and Bahasa Malaysia and Bahasa Indonesia), and the research method.

Rationale

As a language learner, I have had successful experiences acquiring a target language when immersed in the target culture. In comparison to this, I have had more difficulty as an adult learner in a language classroom. The contradiction between the inhibition I feel in class and the confidence I have in the field caused my interest in exploring the reasons for this disparity. This project was originally designed to discover what it was in the field that so facilitated my acquisition.

Although I hoped that some teaching implications might emerge, I realized that an introspecitve study would have to focus on my individual experience. To do so, I documented my second language acquisition by keeping a diary. I used the diary as a place to record my observations. In addition to its function as a research document, the diary served to clarify my experiences and to reveal the process of my acquisition.

Although at the time I began, I had had some previous exposure to the languages, I chose to refrain from formal

study when in the field. The purpose for this was to isolate the variables and patterns which are field specific, and not influenced by other factors. I felt that if I had enrolled in a language course, although I would have progressed more rapidly, this would have interfered with the acquisition process as it occurs in the field.

Because of various teaching and personal commitments, I had the opportunity to spend three months in Malaysia and nine in Indonesia. My acquisition of Bahasa Malaysia and Bahasa Indonesia was the seventh and eighth times I had immersed myself in target cultures in order to master languages. I had done so before six times with four other languages.

Language Learning History

I will include a history of my language learning and acquiring experiences in chronological order. This history should provide a retrospective description of my language learning experiences. In examining these experiences, I found that some of the themes which emerged in the past recurred in my acquisition of Bahasa Malaysia and Bahasa Indonesia. In addition, these experiences provide information about the kind of learner I was prior to my present experience.

I feel that these previous experiences are also important for through them I have probably developed acquisition strategies which can be and have been employed in my learning of successive languages. Larsen-Freeman discusses

this concept in an article published in The Second Language Acquisition Studies. She writes,

> Cognitive strategies do make a difference. All other things being equal, why is it reportedly true that third and fourth languages are easier to learn than the second?3

Although in providing this description I don't attempt to answer this question, I do feel that having learned several other languages before Bahasa Malaysia and Bahasa Indonesia has been an important factor in the development of my own acquisition strategies.

My first language acquisition experience was at the age of ten in Puerto Rico. During my summer vacation my parents sent me to stay with some business associates outside of San Juan. Although the family spoke English, I had to and did use Spanish with their servants and neighbors. I don't really remember how I accomplished this, although I do remember enjoying it. I did not stay in Puerto Rico long enough to become bilingual, but I believe the experience initiated my love for learning languages.

When I entered junior high school a year later, I chose to study Spanish to fulfill the language requirements. For the next two years, I studied Spanish twenty-three minutes a day five days a week. My only memory of the first year was

3 Diane Larsen-Freeman, "Second Language Acquisition: Getting the Whole Picture," in Second Language Acquisition Studies: Series on Issues in Second Language Research, ed. Kathleen Bailey, Michael Long and Sabrina Peck, (Rowley, Mass: Newbury House, 1983), p. 7.

that the course wasn't very interesting, though my teacher, an older man from Cuba, was nice. The second year I was taught by a young American woman who was married to a Spaniard. Her classes were more fun and renewed my enthusiasm for Spanish and for learning languages.

The following year I transferred to a boarding school in New England. I found myself disinterested in Spanish, maybe because my learning of it in junior high school was slow compared to my experience in Puerto Rico. I had always been interested in French because of its aesthetic value, and so I decided to enroll in beginning French instead of Spanish. We were taught by an American who obviously had a love for French and tried to convey that to his students.

We used a text that only contained pictures. We learned dialogs and told stories about the pictures without ever reading a word. There were five of us in the class, we sat on couches and on the floor, and our only required work was to listen to taped dialogs at night. It was a non-threatening, supportive class which instilled in me a love for the language and motivated me to pursue my study of it.

The following Fall all five of us continued our French study in France. We spent three months in Clermont-Ferrand living with host families and attending language classes taught by our American teacher in the Provincial Center. I have little memory of the class. We began to study written French which was not as interesting to me as the spoken language. The best part of the experience was the family.

They encouraged me to speak French and by welcoming me into their warm home, I was able to feel a part of the culture. I was able to return to visit them the following summer and kept in touch with them for several years.

I enjoyed the experience in France so much that two years later I joined a similar program in Madrid, Spain. I lived in a boarding house and attended classes in a commercial language institute. I remember feeling ambivalent both about the classes and my living situation. Fortunately, I was able to immerse myself into the language and culture by making friends with some Spaniards my own age.

After these successful language experiences abroad I entered college intending to major in foreign languages. I enrolled in French 201, a review course taught by a German Professor of French. Although I liked my teacher, this class was my first experience feeling anxious in a language class. I never felt able to perform at the level the class required. Nevertheless I finished the course and suffered through the following two required sections.

The same professor offered a special course in French Theatre which I also joined. In it we performed Moliere plays. This course was more like an extracurricular activity. I was able to relax and enjoy performing and did not feel as inhibited as in class.

In the Fall of my second year, I enrolled in a required French conversation course, and Spanish 201, also required. In both courses I found that I did not have any feelings of

anxiety simply because I felt that I had already mastered the material. I also felt that the instructors of both courses were supportive of the students.

As a foreign language major at my college, I had to study a third language. I was interested in learning a non-Indo-European language. During my second year, Thai was being offered to prepare a group of students who were going to study in Thailand. Having had such positive experiences abroad, I became interested in this program, and subsequently joined the group.

The Thai course was beginning Thai taught two nights a week by a Laotian refugee. She was enthusiastic about Thai, but not about teaching. Her classes were relaxed, and I sensed she didn't take teaching very seriously. As a result, her classes were fun, and I felt neither inhibition nor anxiety from having to perform.

I spent my first month in Thailand studying Thai intensively at Srinakharinwirot University in Bangkok. I was taught by seven different instructors for six hours a day. My anxiety level in the classes depended upon who the teacher was and how much that person demanded.

I was fortunate to stay with one of the teachers I felt comfortable with. My experience in her house was ideal for me. We spent our evenings practicing by singing Thai folk songs and chatting. I grew to love Thai culture as I experienced it there, and have since returned twice to visit.

I spent the following months in Thailand between

Phitsanulok in the North and Songkla in the South. I also lived with host families, but I was not close to them. I spent my days studying music at branch campuses of Srinakharinwirot University. My music instruction was entirely in Thai. Working on music gave me a purpose for learning the language. The Music Department also provided me with a peer group. I feel that these relationships with people were essential for developing positive attitudes towards the target culture.

When I returned to the United States, I was no longer interested in majoring in foreign languages. I switched departments and pursued Asian Studies, with my focus being Thailand. I was able to design my own course of study and so incorporated independent study of Thai into my program. A Thai foreign student tutored me. I had language tapes and a programmed reader for literacy. I thoroughly enjoyed these courses, and continued them for three terms. Being my own boss, with no teacher, no classroom, no fellow students, and no pressure, enabled me to pursue my study with enthusiasm and without anxiety.

Towards the end of my senior year, I was accepted as an ESL teacher for Mombusho, the Japanese Ministry of Education. To prepare for living in Japan, I decided to enroll in a Beginning Japanese course. The teacher was a native speaker determined to bring a little Japanese-style discipline into his American classroom. His method was rapid fire drilling and weekly tests. I dreaded each session, and when I

finished the class, I had minimal Japanese proficiency.

Once in Japan, I enrolled in private Japanese lessons offered by the cultural center in my city. My teacher was a housewife who volunteered to teach resident foreigners. She was very kind and I felt at ease with her. I studied Japanese with her for one hour a week for one year. At the end of one year, I increased to two hours per week for the next three months. She demanded hard work, but I never felt inhibited. I feel that the one-on-one situation provided us with the opportunity to become friends. It alleviated the discomfort I was growing accustomed to in the classroom.

At the same time, I studied pottery four hours per week. None of my classmates nor my teachers could speak English. I was forced to use Japanese to communicate with them. As in Thailand, I found this situation focused my attention away from the language and in doing so, helped me to improve my skills.

While in Japan, I decided to spend my vacation in Thailand. I returned to Bangkok and stayed with my host family there. Because I had continued my study of Thai in college, my Thai was better than it had been when I was in Thailand as a student. I spent the entire two week holiday speaking Thai. When I returned to Japan, I felt I had lost my Japanese. In some ways, I didn't want to speak Japanese. Thai was much more accessible and I was better at it. It was almost as though I wanted to speak a second language that I was almost bilingual in, rather than struggle with a new one.

When I left Japan, I enrolled in the MAT Program at the School for International Training. One of the requirements for this program was one semester of a second language. Because there were no Japanese courses, I decided on Intermediate Spanish.

The students' proficiency ranged from high beginners to low advanced. The teacher, a native speaker, had the tendency to teach to the more advanced students. It had been a long time since I had studied Spanish and I felt that I was among the less proficient. As a result, I felt competitive and anxious about my performance. I stopped attending the class temporarily, and returned only so that I could receive credit for the course.

I decided to spend the following two months in Mexico to fulfill my student teaching requirement. I lived in the small city of Campeche on the Yucatan Peninsula. I stayed with a host family that I never felt close to. I was lonely, I was twelve hours away by bus from my boyfriend, and my students had the tendency to prefer dancing to studying English. Although these negative personal factors were influencing my emotional outlook, I did not feel they were related to Mexico. Surprisingly, I was able to separate my personal feelings from my perspective on the culture. This helped to keep my motivation for learning Spanish high. As Genesee remarks

> The learner must have positive attitudes towards the target language and the target language group

> if he or she is to sustain the motivation necessary to undertake the extended and at times demanding efforts required to master a second language.[4]

In Mexico it was fortunate that I felt positive about the culture. Otherwise I feel the whole experience there would have been a disaster.

When I returned to graduate school for the Spring semester, I chose to enroll in an Intermediate French course offered by one of my fellow MAT students. I joined this class primarily to observe my friend's teaching style. There were only four students in the class and I knew them all. It was not a threatening experience because I was one of the more advanced members of the class. In addition, my motivation for enrolling in the course, to observe her, distracted me from worrying about my performance. I was familiar with most of the approaches she was experimenting with so there were no unknowns to cause anxiety.

These are my experiences, both in and out of class. By retrospectively examining my previous language learning, several themes were revealed to me about myself as a learner. Although these have emerged through the subjective lens of memory and introspection, they do contribute to an understanding of what kind of learner I am.

Throughout this summary of my previous learning experiences, I have talked about my feelings in language

[4] Fred Genesee, Pierre Rogers, and Naomi Holobow, "The Social Psychology of Second Language Learning: Another Point of View," Language Learning: A Journal of Applied Linguistics, Vol. 33, No. 2, (June 1983), p. 11.

learning. Deborah Plummer, in her acquisition paper wrote,

> I consider learning a second or foreign language a different type of learning than other subjects. One's whole person and psyche are involved and this includes emotions and the effect of the environment upon them. 5

In my case, it seems that these emotions and the effect of the environment were major factors in determining the success of my acquisition. If I was not comfortable in a learning situation, I was less likely to do well.

The first theme which emerged may be a reason why I am better able to acquire languages in the field. If I have the opportunity to use a language communicatively, I am more comfortable and more successful. There is something in the artificial evaluative environment of the classroom which stifles me. My experience in Thailand studying music and my experience in Japan studying ceramics are two clear examples of this. In both cases my attention was not on the language, but rather on communication using the language. This caused me to be less self-conscious and enhanced fluency.

Because most of my language learning experiences have been in the classroom, the remaining themes deal primarily with classroom learning. First, I think it is important to note that my difficulties in the classroom began when I entered college at age eighteen. I feel that as a child learner of languages I was not inhibited in the classroom.

5 Deborah Plummer, "A Summary of a Foreign Language Learning Diary," An unpublished manuscript, UCLA 1976, p. 11.

Although this age factor for classroom difficulties is not addressed in this paper, it is a valuable topic for further research.

Another factor which relates to classroom learning is if I have clear personal objectives in a course, I tend to do better. An example of this is my studying French in graduate school. To contrast this, my Spanish class in graduate school was a disaster because I had no purpose for taking the class other than fulfilling a requirement.

Other factors which emerged were my comfort in small groups versus anxiety in larger ones, my preference for a non-threatening environment, and my tendency to be competitive when I feel that I am not as advanced as fellow students. I find the frequency of such words as 'anxiety' or 'inhibition' in my description of my learning shows me that I need to feel secure before I can progress in a language. If I don't feel secure, the result is anxiety and inhibition.

Bernbrock, in his paper points out that there are types of students who do not like to perform in class, and that putting them "on the spot" may further inhibit students.[6] Perhaps it is the absence of these anxiety-producing situations that frees me in the field.

Predeparture Exposure to Bahasa Malaysia/Indonesia

In all of my previous language learning experiences,

[6] Chris Bernbrock, "An Introspective Study of Second Language Learning," An unpublished Manuscript, UCLA, p. 9.

immersion in the field either was preceded by, coincided with, or was followed by formal training in the classroom. My experience with Bahasa Malaysia and Bahasa Indonesia differs from this in that I have had only three hours of structured study in the languages.

My first awareness of Bahasa Malaysia/Indonesia was in March 1982. I had some American friends at the time who were bound for a year of study in Indonesia. They taught me some phrases which we used for fun together. When they left, I had no occasion to practice my newly learned language, and I soon lost interest in it.

In September 1985, I began graduate school. One of my classmates was an Indonesian, Eko, whom I later married. Until April 1986 he taught me various phrases at random. These were learned with a sense of play. Practicing Indonesian developed into an intimate game between us.

In April 1986 we decided to accept a teaching position in Malaysia with some other MAT classmates. To help prepare us for our upcoming adventure, Eko taught three one-hour sessions of Bahasa Indonesia. These three hours were infomal, but structured. I experienced anxiety during these classes because what had been a leisure activity was suddenly a structured, evaluated process. My personal relationship with the teacher, my future husband, also made me uncomfortable. I felt a sudden pressure to perform, with anxiety being the result.

Nevertheless, because of those three hours of training

coupled with previous informal learning, I was a false beginner embarking on acquiring a language which I was already exposed to. I estimated that by the time I reached Malaysia in June 1986, I had a working vocabulary of 59 words to build from.

Predeparture Motivation

Gardner and Lambert discuss two types of motivation. The first, integrative, is "where the aim in language study is to learn more about the language group or to meet more and different people." Instrumental motivation, on the other hand, is "where the reasons reflect the more utilitarian value of linguistic achievement."[7]

In my case with Bahasa Malaysia and Bahasa Indonesia, I had both very personal integrative reasons and very practical instrumental reasons for pursuing my study of these two languages abroad. I was able to identify the following three specific factors: personal, survival and project needs.

I had married a native speaker of Bahasa Indonesia. I knew that his family were not English speakers, and I needed the language to communicate with them. Although I had not yet met his family when I left for the field, this potential communication obstacle served as a strong motivating factor.

[7] Robert C. Gardner and Wallace E.Lambert, "Motivational Variables in Second Language Acquisition," Canadian Journal of Psychology, Vol. 13, No. 4, (1959), p. 267

Beyond communicating with his family, I was also motivated to learn Bahasa Indonesia so that I could better understand his background. I wanted to know and be accepted by those in his family and culture, and I felt that the only way to begin doing so was by learning the language. Rebecca Jones, in her paper, discusses Larsen and Smalley's work on bilingualism. It is their feeling that the only way to be bilingual is to become a member of the target language community.[8] This is precisely what I was attempting by trying to fit into my husband's family through the language.

Schumann discusses intended length of residence as a social factor affecting acquisition. His idea is that if the learner plans to spend "a long time in the target language area, it is likely (that he will) develop more extensive contacts with the target language group."[9] According to Schumann's theory of acculturation, this contact is precisely what is necessary for the learner to integrate with the target language group.[10] This integration, in turn, is what Gardner discusses as the "ultimate goal" of second language learning.[11] In my experience, this is true. My length of

[8] Rebecca A. Jones, "Social and Psychological Factors in Second Language Acquisition: A Study of an Individual," Paper presented at the Los Angeles Second Language Research Forum, February 1977, p. 1.

[9] Schumann, Acculturation Model, p. 31.

[10] Schumann, Acculturation Model, p. 29.

[11] Genesee, p. 211.

residence in the countries this time was short. However, being a family member through marriage presented me with the potential of spending a great deal of the rest of my life in the target language area. I had to integrate with the target language group in Indonesia for my relationships with people there were permanent. This was probably the greatest factor which contributed to my acquisition while in Indonesia.

A less personal factor which influenced my initial motivation was survival. Although with Eko's family I wished greater proficiency than survival level, my immediate concern in Malaysia was to be able to take care of myself in the language. I later found in Malaysia that this was not so important, as English is widely spoken. After having the luxury of speaking English in Malaysia, though, I was shocked when I arrived in Indonesia and found that I really did have to speak Bahasa Indonesia to communicate.

My third motivation was to complete this project. While the first two may be considered integrative motivation, this final purpose was instrumental. In order to identify factors that contributed to my acquisition, I needed to try acquiring something. In essence I was motivated to learn the languages so that I would have a resource for this project.

The Research Method

In pursuing my research, I wished to identify factors which influenced my own acquisition of languages in the field. I chose to do this by keeping a language acquisition

diary. I felt that by observing and then documenting my experience, I could serve as the ethnographer of my own acquisition. The diary became the place where I could observe, reflect upon, and clarify my acquisition experiences.

The diary study as a way to document one's acquisition experience may be questionable to some researchers. The controversy over the diary studies comes from the fact that the diaries, as data, may not be considered scientific research. The issue is really one of whether the diaries are science or art; whether they merely discover or help to create the findings. For the researcher concerned with objectivity in scientific method, the diary studies may not comply.

Another similar issue arises with the diary studies. It is an age-old question in ethnographic research of whether the presence of the observer alters the behavior of the observed. In the case of a second language acquisition diary, the observer and observed are one in the same person. As Schumann notes,

> In other words, we may want to entertain the possibility that we create the reality we investigate, that objectivity is an impossibility and that we may only be able to describe, but not predict and explain. 12

A final issue remains concerning the generalizability of

12 John H. Schumann, "Art and Science in Second Language Acquisition Research," Language Learning: A Journal of Applied Linguistics, Vol. 33, No. 5, Special Issue (1983) p. 68.

the diary studies.[13] The diary studies have been successful in documenting individual acquisition experiences. However, there is a question as to whether individual findings can be applied to more than one learner. In doing a diary study, I hope that there may be factors I discover which might apply to other learners. If diary studies are compared, and their similarities extracted, perhaps some generalizable issues will emerge. Until that point, however, diary studies are valuable in that they provide insight into individual acquisition.

I initially believed that the results of my research would provide implications for teaching. I hoped that by isolating incidents where acquisition occurred, I would then know how language was internalized. I felt that as a teacher I could apply what I learned about the internalizing process to my classroom so that I could create an acquisition environment that would facilitate acquisition for the students. As Bernbrock mentions in his diary study,

> It is hoped that by looking at the language learning experience of an individual learner, we will be able to gain some insight into factors that may be important to the language learning processes of others as well.[14]

[13] Kathleen Bailey, "Competetiveness and Anxiety in Adult Second Language Learning: Looking At and Through the Diary Studies," In Classroom Oriented Research in Second Language Acquisition, ed. Michael Long and Herbert Seliger, (Rowley, Mass: Newbury House, 1983), p. 78.

[14] Bernbrock, p. 1.

I began the diary by keeping detailed descriptions of words I felt that I had acquired, and how I acquired them. I tried to document each instance I heard or saw individual words. This I did retrospectively. I would note the moment it had been acquired, and then trace the steps backward. This is not to say that I correlated the learning of words with the learning of language. I was forced, however, as a beginner, to focus on words as I was not yet able to put sentences together until after four months in the environment. I continued this approach to diary-keeping throughout my three months in Malaysia. An example of this type of entry from my diary best illustrates my diary format.

June 18

Perahan Oren: orange juice. After drinking orange juice from a box at a stall several times, I read the box and the next time I asked for it in Malay - with success.

By the time I left Malaysia, I felt a need to record observations other than words and the context in which I acquired them. My acquisition was suffering from issues unrelated to the acquisition of individual words. I realized that I also needed to include personal responses to the situations I found myself in. Because my own reactions needed to be included, I changed the format of my diary. I began recording how I felt about what I was learning and the environment I was learning it in, in addition to the actual words I was acquiring. The change in diary format is illustrated with the retrospective diary entry below.

September 17

> In Malaysia, I didn't like Bahasa Malaysia at all. Probably that is because every time I tried to talk, I would be answered in English. It was easy to give up. More than that, though, the aversion I had towards the Malay culture really affected my lack of acquisition.

The diary extends over almost one year. I found that the actual keeping of the diary was a challenging exercise for me. In Malaysia, because of my negative reaction to the environment, I found that I could rarely settle down to do my diary. Until my life was in order, I just couldn't focus. Francine Schumann discusses a similar phenomenon in her acquisition study, which she refers to as "nesting patterns."[15] In my case, the need to feel settled did not interfere with my acquisition as much as it did with my documenting that acquisition. Likewise, in Indonesia, I never seemed able to set aside a regular schedule for keeping the diary. As a result, the document itself was written in sporadically.

Nevertheless, what was written down serves as the backbone for my findings. I found that simply having the diary helped me to be conscious of my acquisition. I made mental notes and was aware of things that, had I not had the diary, I would not have perceived. My final conclusions,

[15] Francine Schumann, "Diary of A Language Learner: A Further Analysis," In Research in Second Language Acquisition Selected Papers of the L.A. Second Language Acquisition Research Forum, ed. Robin Scarcella and Stephen Krashen, (Rowley, Mass: Newbury House, 1980), p. 51.

then, come from both a written and an internalized mental diary.

Part of my intention in pursuing this project initially was that I would do a naive study, without any outside 'influences'. I created the diary format myself, I acquired the languages without formal instruction, and I refrained from reading the literature on acquisition until after I had completed my field work. My rationale for doing this was to prevent all outside influences on my acquisition, whether they be in the form of instructed language or other people's acquisition models.

Upon returning from the field, however, I have attempted to acquaint myself more with the literature, and specifically with other diary studies. I have perused a large number of original diary studies, as well as papers concerning language acquisition and the effect of cultural attitudes on the process. I found that in postponing this literature research I achieved my goal of naivete. My acquisition strategies, and the factors I discovered that influenced the success of these strategies, were my own. Nevertheless, familiarizing myself with the literature after returning from the field has been helpful in providing me with the terminology to use in describing my experiences.

In addition, studying other diaries and papers allowed me the opportunity to compare others' results with my own. I found that though my attempt to acquire in the field outside of a classroom was new, many of the factors I identified

that influenced this acquisition were not. It is the discovery of these recurring themes which makes introspective acquisition studies so rewarding.

Chapter II: The Language Acquisition Environments

This chapter will explore Malaysia and Indonesia as acquisition environments. I found that my feelings towards these environments were instrumental in determining whether or not I would acquire the languages. Included in this chapter is a description of the two languages as well as a description of the countries and their cultures as I experienced them. The highly subjective descriptions of the cultures are my perceptions and do not necessarily reflect others' opinions.

The Languages

Bahasa Malaysia and Bahasa Indonesia are sister dialects, their differences being primarily regional variations. The vocabulary and grammatical structure of the two are nearly identical. Both belong to the Malayan Polynesian language group, the varieties of which extend from Madagascar in the West to Tonga and Samoa in the East.

Malay is the indigenous language of the Malay populations of Peninsular Malaysia, the coasts of Borneo, and Eastern Sumatra. It was historically the lingua franca of maritime Southeast Asia and was widely understood throughout Peninsular Malaysia, Southern Thailand, the Indonesian Archipelago, and the Southern Phillipines.[16] It was chosen by both Malaysia and Indonesia as their national languages

[16] Frederica Bunge, Malaysia: A Country Study, Foreign Area Studies, (The American University Press, 1984) p. 107.

when Malaysia became independent of Britain and Indonesia became independent of Holland.

Modern Bahasa Malaysia is slightly different from Bahasa Indonesia. This is mainly due to the outside influences which have affected the two countries differently. Because Britain occupied Malaysia until 1958, many English words were incorporated into Bahasa Malaysia but not into Bahasa Indonesia.[17] Despite these differences, though, the two countries have been making a joint effort since 1972 to standardize the grammar and spelling.

These days Bahasa Malaysia is a language caught in the midst of a political power struggle. As in many multiethnic societies, language use and language policy are sources of conflict. Bahasa Malaysia became the national language after Independence in 1958. It is the mother tongue of the Islamic Malay population and I would argue that the use of their language is a tool to keep the Malay culturally and politically dominant.

Many non-Malays do not so readily identify Bahasa Malaysia as their own. At the time of Independence, these people hoped that "English would remain indefinitely on a par with Malay and there would be liberal provisions for the use

[17] An example of the English impact on Bahasa Malaysia is the word for orange. In Bahasa Malaysia, it is _oren_ which closely resembles the English cognate. In Bahasa Indonesia, however, it is _jeruk_ a completely different word with a completely different origin.

of other languages."[18] The two large ethnic minorities in Malaysia are the Chinese and the Indian. Among themselves, they continue to speak the various Chinese and Indian dialects. My impression was that intergroup communication between Indian and Chinese still seems to be done in the more neutral English.

I suspect that part of the reason for the neutrality of English is that the British left Malaysia peacefully. In essence, they granted Independence without major conflict. The result is that there is little lingering animosity towards the British and their language. The fact that English is neutral and Malay is not, then, may be the reason why English is as much a lingua franca in Malaysia as Bahasa Malaysia. It may also account for the continuing influence English has on the national language.

In contrast to the language division made in Malaysia, Bahasa Indonesia is seen as a unifying force in modern Indonesia. In 1928 it was chosen as the national language due to the fact that it was easy to master and could be a symbol of the new nation's unity. Indonesia is a country with over 300 ethnic groups speaking between 150 and 400 languages.[19] The actual number of languages is unclear due to the difficulty in distinguishing dialects from distinct languages.

[18] Bunge, Malaysia, p. 109.

[19] Frederica Bunge, Indonesia: A Country Study, Foreign Area Studies, (The American University Press, 1983) p. 97.

Because of the enormous variety of the Indonesian people, then, Bahasa Indonesia has been used historically as well as in modern times to bridge the communication gaps between them. Even during the Dutch colonial era, and later during the Japanese Occupation, Indonesian was indispensible for interethnic communication.[20]

Like Malaysia, Indonesia has had considerable outside influence. There has been one foreign presence after another in Indonesia's history, and they have all been responsible for some contributions to the language. Among these influences are Sanskrit, Tamil, Arabic, Chinese, Portugese, Dutch, and English.

In considering the influences on Bahasa Indonesia from abroad, it should not be forgotten that many of the local languages have also had an impact on the development of the the national language. Probably the most current of these is the Javanization of Bahasa Indonesia, the result of the political and cultural dominance of the Javanese people in Indonesia.

Malaysia

Armed with my vocabulary of 59[21] words, I arrived in Malaysia on June 14, 1986. I imagined that, like my other experiences abroad, I would soon find myself immersed in a flood of linguistic input. I was prepared to settle into a

[20] Bunge, Indonesia, p. 97.

[21] For a list of these 59 words, please see Appendix I.

routine, become acquainted with the culture, and proceed in my acquisition of the language.

Slim River, Perak[22] was my home for my three months in Malaysia. Two hours drive from Kuala Lumpur, it was an old Chinese resettlement site surrounded by rubber and palm oil plantations. It was an extremely small town, two blocks long, and two blocks wide. Because of its history and because the economy was based on rubber and palm oil, the majority of the inhabitants were Chinese merchants and Indian laborers.

The school where I was employed was in the center of town. It was a training school for future government employees who had received scholarships to study in American or British Universities. In keeping with the Malay government's policy, the majority of these students were ethnic Malay. The government maintained that the Malay were both the indigenous and the largest ethnic group in the country. Their economic status, though, was far below that of the Chinese, who traditionally were the successful businessmen and merchants. In an effort to correct this imbalance, the primarily Malay government chose to give the Malay group privileges that it did not extend to the others. It was my opinion, however, that the real reason for granting these privileges was political and not economic. What better way to keep the Malay in power, than to provide them with an

[22] The ethnic composition of Perak State is 45% Malay, 41% Chinese, and 14% Indian.

education and then hire them as government employees?

In 1986, however, the Chinese and Indians I knew seemed to resent these policies. The school where I worked, as a symbol of these policies, was also resented by many Chinese and Indians in Slim River. My earliest realization of this came when an Indian girl asked me why I only taught the Malay, and not the Chinese or Indian. I felt then that the policies that caused this segregation were conflicting with my own values.

I experienced a great deal of personal turmoil in Malaysia because I was working for a government which supported policies I didn't agree with. My students, though I liked them, were destined to promote the same policies. I hated that I had become a part of that system, no matter how minor a player I was.

The Islamic Malay culture was a society that challenged me. I was disturbed by many aspects of the society I couldn't understand or agree with. Most disturbing was my feeling that the Malay discriminated on the basis of race, religion, and sex. There is great inequality in Malaysia. The animosity that exists between groups produces a certain tension that I have never witnessed elsewhere. In my experience, distrust and maybe even hatred characterize the relationship between the Malay and other groups.

Although I tried to respect the Malay for adhering to their beliefs and traditions, I was unable to get beyond my own values to fairly assess theirs. Because of these

conflicts, I preferred the company of Chinese and Indians. I suppose I was able to empathize with them as they were struggling in the face of Malay political dominance.

With all these negative perceptions of the Malay, it was very difficult for me to acquire the language. Rebecca Jones, in her paper, quotes Rina Shapira,

> It is the attitude towards the target language, the people who speak it, and the culture of those people which determines the degree of motivation a student might have in learning a second language.[23]

I did not want to speak the language of a group of people whose culture I had difficulty accepting. When pursuing my study of Bahasa Malaysia, I realized that my interlocutors were primarily the Malay. I found that I, like the other non-Malay, preferred to use English. I associated the language with the culture and my acquisition suffered for this reason.

For the most part, my experience in Malaysia was unpleasant. I experienced conflicts in most aspects of my life, from my job to my living in the culture. As Schumann points out,

> Culture shock and culture stress can induce a whole syndrome of rejection which diverts attention and energy from learning a second language.[24]

In Malaysia, I was unable to integrate well with the target group, the Malay. My experience was one of shock and stress, and as Schumann points out the result was rejection of the

[23] Jones, Thesis, p. 7.

[24] Jones, paper, p. 3.

target language and culture.

Two other ESL teachers, my husband and I left our positions in Malaysia after three months there. Our first destination after leaving Slim River was Thailand. Thailand for me had developed into my Asian 'home'. I felt enormous cultural and linguistic relief whenever I was there. I enjoyed serving as translator for my friends and I felt comfortable being once again immersed in a culture I respected.

When the week was through, we returned to Penang, Malaysia en route to Medan, Indonesia. When I returned to Malaysia after having been in Thailand, I was unable to retrieve the minimal Malay I had acquired. For all practical purposes, it seemed to be gone. In its place was Thai, a language that I felt fluent in with a culture which I felt close to.

This mental block against the language lasted into my first week in Indonesia. I had no desire to speak Indonesian at first. Because I was travelling through Indonesia with my husband, a native speaker, I didn't have to.

Indonesia

There is much about Indonesia that resembles Malaysia. They share the same language, the same primary religion, and much of the same history. Their differences, though, are as many as their similarities. Their size, diversity, politics, and cultural differences are examples of what makes the two countries unique.

Malaysia is a relatively tiny country, with a population of 14 million people. Indonesia, on the other hand, is the fifth most populated country on Earth, with approximately 160 million people. Although attempts have been made to unify Indonesia, it is still a country of incredible diversity. Malaysia, meanwhile, has only three major ethnic groups and a handful of assorted tribes.

Although the Indonesian government struggles to achieve unity in the country, it has in my opinion, remained very tolerant of the diversity. This is so despite the fact that 60% of Indonesia's population lives on the tiny island of Java. This is not to say that the Javanese do not influence or dominate the rest of the country, because they do. Of course there are racial struggles, but currently in Indonesia, they are more subtle than in Malaysia.

There are differences in the cultures of the two countries despite their similar histories. Much of Malaysian culture is derived from elsewhere: the Middle East, China, and India. Indonesia was also influenced by the same cultures. However, in Indonesia, the indigenous island cultures merged with these foreign influences to produce a unique Indonesian blend. My impression was that while Malaysia is sophisticated, Indonesia is more rugged. While Malaysia is orderly, Indonesia seems to thrive on chaos. Malaysia is more affluent than Indonesia, but Indonesia feels more dynamic. I would even argue that Islam in Malaysia more closely mirrors the Middle East, while in Indonesia it has

blended more with indigenous beliefs and traditions.

When I arrived in Indonesia the aversion I had felt towards Malaysia dissipated. I had spent a week vacationing in one of my favorite countries, Thailand, and I felt I had distanced myself from my negative experiences. Fortunately, I approached this new country with a fresh outlook. I knew enough about Indonesia to realize that it would differ from Malaysia in many ways. I anticipated with excitement the change of culture and the opportunity to try acquisition a second time.

When I arrived in Jakarta, the capitol, after travelling through Sumatra, I was confronted with the city that would be my 'home' for much of my time in Indonesia. Hot, humid, polluted, noisy and crowded, Jakarta was destined to be one of my least favorite places. I was never at ease in the city and it was fortunate that I had my husband's family's home in Central Java to escape to.

Ambarawa, Central Java was my retreat in Indonesia. A small market town twelve hours by bus from Jakarta, Ambarawa was cool, comfortable, and relaxing. Nestled among the volcanoes with a lake at its feet, Ambarawa is one of the famous fertile areas of Java Island. Surrounded by agricultural villages, the Ambarawa region has maintained much of the traditional Javanese customs and lifestyle.

My life in Indonesia was split between the discomfort of Jakarta and the comfort of Ambarawa. In Jakarta, we lived in a house rented by the school where we were employed. Many of

the foreign teachers who worked with us lived in the same home. Although it was a comfortable house, its location in the center of Jakarta meant that it was surrounded by poor Indonesian neighborhoods. Nearby, too, was Jalan Jaksa, the favorite spot for foreigners who were travelling cheaply.

We had two different maids who stayed in the house while we were there. I mention them because they didn't speak English and they were my major sources of language. The first one was a seventeen-year old village girl from East Java. She liked to joke with the foreigners in the house, and made an effort to simplify her language for us. When she left, a sixty-year old Jakartan moved in. It became my responsibility to communicate with her. She was fond of chatting with me and actually through her I received more input than from anyone else. Other than these two and my husband, my contact with Bahasa Indonesia was limited to shopkeepers and the Indonesian staff at my school.

I often felt lonely and alienated in Jakarta. As a Western woman it was virtually impossible for me to venture out alone. I was verbally hassled regularly and occasionally was physically harassed. There is much about the role of women in the Malaysian and Indonesian Islamic societies that I struggle with. Francine Schumann mentions a similar experience in her acquisition paper.

> Its clear from the Iran journal that the social and psychological distance at which the culture puts a

> Western woman was operative in my behavior as a language learner.25

Like Francine Schumann, my difficulty in making contact with members of the target group in Jakarta, had an effect on my progress in the language. My inability to get acquainted with people hindered the integration process so necessary in acquisition.

I have not yet come to terms with the fact that women are to be protected. In Jakarta I would occasionally rebel by going out into the city alone. The result was invariably disaster. I grew to hate the people on the streets as they were truly threatening to me. My only choice was to retreat to the safety of my own world of school and my home.

Francine Schumann seems to have experienced a similar situation. In a paper about her Iran experiences she writes,

> On January 31st I wrote, "I realize I have intentionally avoided harassment in the streets. It occurred to me when I returned to the hotel that I never go out alone: I'm always in the protective company of John." Again on February 6th I note, "I need never venture out alone if I don't wish to as I have no outside commitments. Therefore I can avoid contact with people on the streets who annoy me." And a third entry on February 12th, "...I'm so isolated here. John is really the only person that I spend time with aside from our occasional participation in social events." 26

Like Francine Schumann in Iran, I felt harassed and isolated. So much of my experience in Jakarta mirrored hers.

25 Francine Schumann, "Diary of A Language Learner: A Further Analysis," Paper presented at the L.A. Second Language Research Forum, October 6,7,8, 1978, p. 13.

26 Francine Schumann, paper, p. 13.

It was very difficult to make friends in Jakarta. It was not appropriate for me to make friends with men unless I was with my husband. It was very difficult to meet Indonesian women also for they are quite sheltered. My primary contact with Indonesians came through my husband and his friends.

Because of my isolation, my inability to do things alone, and my beginning status in the language, I felt dependent on my husband and frustrated by my supposed helplessness. Cynthia Jaffe, when describing her experience in Holland mentions similar feelings. Although her experience was not an issue of harassment, her reaction to living in a foreign culture seems to resemble my own.

> I hated this dependency, really resented it, and wrote about it in my journal using the words, "this childlike condition," "my frightful dependencies and weaknesses." I hated <u>my self</u>, the person I'd (supposedly) <u>become</u> so unlike the independent self I'd been (in the States) and wanted to continue to be.[27]

I struggled with this in Jakarta. I feel that it was one more result of the distance that was maintained between me and the target language group. My world evolved around my husband in Jakarta. This was a situation which I felt unable to change due to the circumstances.

In Ambarawa my life was completely different. I had a large extended family-in-law as a social group. I found that I felt real psychological relief in Ambarawa as I was able to interact with people. I was drawn into the family group and

[27] Cynthia Jaffe, "Language Acquisition Final Paper," School for International Training, 1983, p. 6.

through them was able to feel less foreign and more a part of the culture.

In Ambarawa I was included in most family activities. I appreciated that family members, especially Eko's sisters, made an effort to include me. Somehow I was able to communicate with the family through a combination of Bahasa Indonesia, Javanese, and English. The actual language used was secondary, however, to the primary objective of communication. I felt comfortable using my language with the family for I felt they would tolerate my mistakes and appreciate my efforts.

My linguistic resources in Central Java differed from Jakarta as much as my social experience. Most people speak Javanese in Central Java, and not necessarily Indonesian. I was therefore confronted with a completely separate language on weekends and holidays. Most people were sensitive to the fact that I didn't know Javanese and would address me in Indonesian. However, unlike Jakarta where I was able to eavesdrop and understand people speaking Indonesian, in Central Java the majority of the conversations that took place around me were in Javanese. This was true both with Eko's family and with people in the town. I was still able to eavesdrop, although by doing so, I was receiving input from another language.

The result of this double exposure to two languages was that I began to acquire both simultaneously, much as a bilingual child would acquire the first two languages. My

major challenge then was in making an effort to identify which was which. Although most Indonesians I knew spoke Javanese and could understand me if I combined the two languages, I felt compelled to distinguish between the two in order to lessen my confusion. I eventually was able to distinguish them through context and the different sounds.

These are my experiences with the languages and in the countries. Stauble mentions in an article she published in the Second Language Acquisition Studies,

> Acculturation is a highly complex process of which second language learning is a part. It was suggested that the second language learning process in particular is subject to interference from a number of acculturative influences which exist in the second language learner's linguistic and cultural environment.28

It is my feeling that the role of the environment and the learner's attitudes towards it, cannot be over-stressed in its capacity to affect acquisition. When I was able to integrate with the target language group as in Ambarawa, my acquisition was more successful. However, when I was distanced from the culture, whether due to my responses to the culture as in Malaysia, or due to circumstances as in Jakarta, my acquisition suffered.

28 Alice Stauble, "Acculturation and Second Language Acquisition," In Research in Second Language Acquisition: Selected Papers of the L.A. Second Language Acquisition Research Forum, ed. Robin Scarcella and Stephen Krashen, (Rowley, Mass: Newbury House, 1980), p. 49.

Chapter III: The Analysis of My Acquisition

In this chapter, I will explore my personal acquisition strategies. I was able to identify two different strategies. They were based on my language needs and influenced by my attitudes towards the target language and culture. In this chapter, I will examine these strategies and the attitudinal factors which influence them. In addition, the concept of the saturation monitor, a filter which limits input, will be explored.

Researchers refer to the "black box" of cognitive processes.[29] This black box is the unknown nature of the process of second language acquisition, a process difficult to identify in research. My attempt to isolate my acquisition strategies by using a diary is the result of my assumption that the acquirer may have more insight into his or her own processes. The following strategies are what I was able to identify. I do not feel that they are the definitive explanation of my mental processes. I wish to allow for some unknown magic that is taking place inside my own black box.

Receptivity as an Acquisition Strategy

I have found that in acquiring second languages, I prefer receptivity as an acquisition strategy. By receptivity I mean actively processing input which I have been receptive to, or aware of, in the language environment. I feel most

[29] Larsen-Freeman, p. 3.

comfortable when I am free to simply receive input without the pressure to perform. Although I may be capable of language production, I find I am better able to progress by silently absorbing language. In fact, I am resentful if I am forced to produce language which I feel has not been adequately processed. In my experience, my internal acquisition processes can function most effectively when not distracted by my being asked to produce the language.

Francine Schumann, in her article about her second language acquisition, mentions that there are two types of acquirers, those who prefer eavesdropping, and those who prefer speaking as acquisition strategies.[30] I am an eavesdropper. I like the secure position of silent observer. Francine Schumann adds that this type of acquirer may "indeed be integratively motivated, but shy."[31] It has been my experience that this shyness is beneficial as it provides me with the opportunity to be especially attentive to both the linguistic and cultural environments.

The Process of Digesting Peripheral Input

My preferred strategy for acquiring languages is as a receptive eavesdropper. I have developed a six stage cyclical process for the acquisition of individual words and phrases that have been acquired through my receptivity to the input. I propose that this process of digesting oral and written

[30] Francine Schumann, Research in SLA, p. 53.

[31] Francine Schumann, Research in SLA, p. 53.

language from the environment is one of digesting peripheral input. I identify it as peripheral because in the early stages of receptive acquisition, the input is available at the outer edge of my awareness.

The six stages involved in this process include; awareness of input, attention to input, hypothesis formation, hypothesis testing, reinforcement, and retention/acquisition. The success of this process is dependent upon my attitudes towards the target culture and the amount of language already in the process of being internalized.

Awareness of Input

If I am fortunate enough to be in the position of receptive observer, I am able to be attentive to the oral and written language I am exposed to. I seem to begin the process by being aware of language around me. I appear to be most aware of the language which is most frequently used in the contexts I find myself in. In Malaysia, my primary contact with the language centered around eating. I ate every meal out and had the opportunity to be surrounded by 'food' language. Consequently, the majority of the language I initially acquired in Malaysia was food-oriented. An example of awareness of input comes from my diary.

July 3

> I remember my first morning in Slim River, I went to the stalls to order tea. The woman there asked me something with the word 'gula'(sugar). I liked the sound of it and was surprised to hear the same word whenever I was in a situation like ordering tea or coffee. Then, one of my colleagues started saying it in

> restaurants when she would order tea. Finally, I realized that 'gula' meant sugar. I think it is easy for me to remember because I associate it with 'Gulag' in Solzhenitsyn's Gulag Archipelago.

Attention to Input

After becoming aware of input, I then focus my attention on that input. I am consciously attentive of the instances where that language is used. If there is language which I hear very frequently, I develop a contextual file organized according to the circumstance in which it was used. An example from my diary concerns the word harus or must.

January 8

> A word that has been on my mind recently is harus. I have been hearing it and seeing it frequently. I still don't know the meaning, but feel that I will know it shortly.

Hypothesis Formation and Testing

When I have received enough input of any item of language, I then form an hypothesis of meaning. This hypothesis may then be reinforced or discarded if future input differs from the meaning I originally assumed it had. I am also able to test the hypothesis by using the language in interactions. This hypothesis testing helps me to try the language to determine whether my assumption has been correct or not.

For example, I remember that I originally thought the word harus meant 'will.' I heard it in contexts such as saya harus pergi. Though I thought this meant 'I will go' it actually meant 'I must go.' I feel that I must have organized these instances into categories. When I heard

harus used in a way to indicate it meant 'must', I then reflected on the other occasions in which I had heard it used. I then used this information to verify whether harus meant 'will' or 'must' by cross-checking the meaning against other instances in which I was aware of its use.

If my hypothesis has been incorrect, I either check the meaning with a native speaker, or I return to the second stage of attention to input. If I choose to do the former, I generally move to the reinforcement stage. If, however, I choose to do the latter, I again take notice of the instances in which the specific language is used. I would then move again to the stages of hypothesis formation and testing. In this way, the cycle is repeated until I feel that my hypothesis is correct. An example from my diary concerns the two alternatives for hypothesis testing using the words harus (must) and dalam (in or deep).

January 8

> Sometimes I ask Eko about words. He is like my living kamus (dictionary). So much of the vocabulary I have learned comes from having asked him, as in the case of dalam. Sometimes, though, I like to wait and not ask him if my meaning is right. I like to try and figure it out for myself. It becomes a game to do so as is the case with harus.

Reinforcement

I then begin reinforcing the language through usage. This is somewhat different from hypothesis testing in that I already feel I understand the meaning. To reinforce the meaning of the word, I tend to use it too often. This overuse assists my acquisition by fixing the meaning of the language

in my mind. As I become more and more skillful with the word, I am able to adjust my overuse of it to a more appropriate level.

An example of this is my reinforcement of the bound morpheme nya meaning 'the'. I realized the meaning of the word sometime in October. I then began to attach it to every noun in my speech. I didn't realize that I was using it too much until Eko pointed out to me that nya only needs to be used as a definite article, and not necessarily with all nouns. The fact that he did that made me conscious of my overuse, and I was able to adjust it.

Acquisition and Retention

The final stage in my acquisition process is acquisition and retention. I mentioned in the reinforcement stage that I would reinforce the language until it was fixed in my mind. This is actually a semipermanent status, subjected to one final screening stage. If I have a need for the language, whether survival or personal, then I am more apt to acquire it permanently. If, however, the language has fulfilled a temporary need, it may not reach the final acquisition stage.

If an item is acquired, then it is retained. If it is not acquired, then it may return to an earlier stage. It is not treated in the same way as new input, however. My memory of the item helps it to progress more rapidly through the early stages, and may mean that the item skips some of the stages through which new input must pass. The following example from my diary points out how items repeat the cycle

if they have not yet been successfully acquired.

January 18

> One amazing thing is that those words which have been forgotten can be revived if they are again 'input'. One example of this is my learning of the word rusak or broken. When waiting to copy something a few months ago the office boy told me the machine was rusak and I would have to come back later. I remember having an occasion to use the word again later. But then, when I needed it recently to describe something I found I could not recall it. Then, today, I went past a bathroom which had the sign RUSAK on the door. This revived the meaning for me, and it is now in my conscious mind ready to be used.

I identified this receptive acquisition process by examining my initial journal entries in Malaysia. I isolated individual words and phrases and tracked them through the six stage acquisition process. An example of a typical journal entry concerns the word lemak or fat.

July 24

> My students were teaching me a song in class today. It was about susu lemak (fat milk). I have heard of and eaten nasi lemak (fat rice) in the food stalls. It is made with coconut. At first I assumed lemak meant coconut, but my students corrected me by explaining that it means 'fat'. Tonight I slipped it in a conversation with Eko, and my use of it seemed to make sense to him.

I was able to identify recurring themes resulting from this diary format which helped me to identify the cycle of acquiring individual words. All of the language which I acquired with this pattern was not actively sought. Instead, it was received as input from the environment.

My successful acquisition with this pattern depended upon attitudinal factors. If my feelings about the environment and the language were negative, I tended to shut

out the input. This was the case, for example, in Malaysia. Rather than being aware of the language, which is the first step towards acquisition, I would ignore it. I retreated into the comfort of English and perceived the target language as background noise. In essence, my rejection of the culture led to my rejection of the language.

In Indonesia, sometimes I felt negative, and sometimes I felt positive. An example of this is my contrasting feelings in Jakarta versus Ambarawa. This fluctuation of my attitudes was reflected in my fluctuating level of success in acquisition. As in Malaysia, if I had negative attitudes towards the target language group, I would ignore input. If, however, my attitudes were positive, I would be quite receptive to available input.

Active Pursuit of Needed Language

I have identified a second strategy for acquisition which is the result of my actively pursuing language to satisfy survival and personal expression needs. Like receptive acquisition, this too is a cyclical process. It includes the following five stages; inquiry, oral repetition for memorization, meaningful use, reinforcement, and acquisition.

Inquiry

In Malaysia and Indonesia, I stayed away from language courses, textbooks, and dictionaries. I did have many human resources, however. In both countries my primary language resource was my husband. I was able to ask questions and

receive correct language from him whenever I needed it. He served as both a resource and a model. In addition to my husband, my students and local colleagues in both countries were accessible resources. Some of my husband's relatives who could speak English were also available to provide me with language if I needed it. All of the people I used as sources were bilingual in Bahasa Malaysia or Bahasa Indonesia and English.

The process of tapping input sources originated with need. If I felt I was lacking language necessary for expression or survival, I would begin by asking my informants. I identify inquiry as the first stage in active pursuit of needed language. If I felt a need, then I asked for the language. Usually I asked in English and received the translation or explanation in Bahasa Malaysia or Bahasa Indonesia from a native speaker.

Oral Repetition for Memorization

Once I would receive the language I had asked for, the next stage I identify is oral repetition for memorization. Much as a person recites a phone number they are trying to remember, I found I would repeat the language I had been given over and over to myself. It was almost as though I was reluctant to stop for fear that I would lose the language.

Meaningful Use

Usually I would ask for language because there was an imminent need for its use. For example, before taking a bus alone, I would ask what to say to a bus conductor when he

comes to collect my fare. I would then repeat the language, rehearsing to myself before I was in the situation. Once I was on the bus, I would have to use the language meaningfully. I call this stage meaningful use. This is the point when the language is used in the intended interaction.

There are two potential situations the acquirer may encounter when trying to use the language meaningfully. The first possibility is that the situaiton is as expected. The second possibility is that the situation is unexpected and the rehearsed language may not be appropriate.

In the event that the situation is as expected, the acquirer has the opportunity to use the asked for language successfully. If, however, the acquirer is faced with an unexpected situation, he or she may have to rely on language other than that which was specifically sought after. If the asked for language is not used, there is a chance that it may not proceed to the next stage in the acquisition cycle.

For example, if I ask for the language to use on the bus and the bus does not come, then I am faced with how to communicate with a taxi driver. At this point, the acquirer may have to abandon the asked for language and try communicating with other language which has already been acquired. The success of negotiating the unexpected situation depends upon how much language the acquirer has at his or her command, and how flexible he or she is.

Reinforcement and Acquisition

If the sought after language can be used meaningfully,

the next stages are similar to the process of receptive acquisition. Language can then be reinforced or discarded, depending on whether the need was temporary or permanent. The result is then either acquisition or a return to an earlier stage.

I was able to identify this process of actively pursuing language also through recurring themes in my diary. An example from my diary concerns how I learned the word percaya or believe.

September 18

> I asked how to say this yesterday when joking around with Eko. He told me the word. I remembered it because I said it a few times outloud. Then today Eko said something which I didn't believe, and I was able to recall the word easily.

My acquisition of peripheral input is regulated by my attitudes towards the target language and culture. My experience with active acquisition differs from this in the way it is influenced by attitudinal factors. By asking for the language, I have an expressed need for it. This need, whether temporary or permanent, generally exists regardless of how I feel about the target language and the culture.

I am therefore able to retain the language in order to meet my immediate communication needs. I find that my attitudes only influence this active process in the last stages. These perceptions towards the target language and culture often determine whether the sought after language will be reinforced and acquired, or discarded. In this way, the final stages of reinforcement and acquisition in both models are similarly subjected to an attitudinal screening.

Saturation Monitor

Both acquisition processes, after going through a final attitude screening, are eventually filtered through a saturation monitor. This monitor serves to limit the amount of language being internalized at any one time.

I found that in my acquisition I reached plateaus of language proficiency. It was almost as though there was a daily quota for language which could not be exceeded. If I was working on a lot of individual words and phrases at the final acquisition stage, it was difficult for me to accept new language at stage one. It was as though inside my cognitive black box, there was a limit to the amount of language to be internalized at any one time.

The following is an example from my diary which deals with the limiting function of the saturation monitor.

September 27

> I have been staying with Eko's family for one week now. I feel like I have progressed a lot in the last week. I'm not exactly sure how much in vocabulary, as I am being told, learning and/or forgetting an enormous amount of vocabulary every day.

Later, I discuss the saturation monitor in more detail.

January 18

> I feel this brings me to the last point, and that is absorption. In my own case I feel there is a saturation level I periodically reach when I need time to digest or absorb the language without taking any more in. When this happens, I find myself playing with those words I am saturated with, and ignoring new input. If I don't do so, I lose the words. I feel that without actively manipulating the language and actively using it, words which have been understood can be forgotten.

I have identified some factors which may affect the saturation monitor. The first is time. There is a limit to how much language can be processed at any one time. The second is circumstantial. This depends on my need at the time I am processing language. The third issue is other second languages. While these have helped in my acquisition of Bahasa Malaysia and Bahasa Indonesia by providing cognates,[32] they sometimes interfere. If I am trying to recall a word, I have found that sometimes a word from another language with a similar meaning or sound may appear in my mind, forcing out the Malaysian or Indonesian one. It is not clear to me whether this phenomenon is part of the function of the saturation monitor. However, I do know that it always occurs when I have been saturated with new input.

The saturation monitor serves as a protective device. It limits intake to prevent saturation of language in process. The successful acquisition of language, whether attained actively or receptively, depends upon the screening function of this monitor. If there is considerable language in the process of being internalized, language may not successfully pass through this filter.

I ideally try to immerse myself in the second language without the pressure and distraction of performance. I am able to digest bits of language which I extract from the oral

[32] For a description of the cognates the other second languages provided, please see Appendix II.

and written resources in the environment. I also, however, have another strategy of eliciting language that I need from native speakers. While the first is receptive acquisition, the latter is active. The amount of language that I can internalize from either pattern depends upon my attitudes and the amount of language which I am already in the process of internalizing.

Chapter IV: The Conclusion

In this chapter, I will further examine my acquisition experiences and the strategies I identified. I have found that the saturation monitor, and aspects of my strategy of actively pursuing needed language, appear to be new. In this chapter, I will look at the latter in particular, and will compare my results to John Schumann's acculturation model.

The Classroom and the Field

In examining my language acquisition history, I have been able to identify differing reactions to language learning in the field and in the classroom. I tended, as an adult learner,to be more successful in the former than the latter. This I attribute to the qualities I posses as a learner and the strategies I employ for my own successful acquisition.

In the classroom I felt inhibited. I was under pressure to perform which made me competitive and anxious. In addition, if I could not identify any purpose for taking the class, I would be further alienated from what I felt to be the artificial classroom environment.

In contrast to this, most of my language acquisition experiences in the field were characterized not by alienation and anxiety, but by success. Acquisition in the field worked for me because I was able to use the language communicatively. I could be receptive to the input when I

needed to, and hence did not suffer under the pressure to perform. In addition, in my past experiences I usually had positive attitudes towards the target cultures. Most often, this was accompanied by integrative motivation which allowed for successful acculturation and acquisition.

Field Work

My decision to learn Bahasa Malaysia and Bahasa Indonesia in the field was the result of my previous positive and successful experiences. I was to find, however, that certain variables affected my feelings towards the target language group. This in turn, influenced my attitudes, my motivation, and ultimately, my acquisition.

In Malaysia, the issues were primarily sociopolitical. My negative reaction to the role of the Malay in that society influenced my desire to learn their language. I identified the Malay political practices with their culture as a whole and the result was a rejection of the language.

In Indonesia, the influence of the environment on my acquisition fluctuated. In Jakarta, I reacted negatively to the role of women and being harassed. My personal freedom was reduced and the resulting resentment was directed at the target group as it existed outside of my immediate circle. By separating my feelings about strangers and my feelings about acquaintances, I was able to progress in the language in Jakarta through my relationships with my maids and the Indonesian staff at work.

My experience in Ambarawa was different from Jakarta in

that it more closely resembled my previous language learning experiences in the field. I had very positive feelings towards the target language group, and was highly motivated to integrate with them and thus speak Indonesian.

My successful acquisition depended in part upon my reaction to the target cultures. The only exception to this existed in the strategy of actively pursuing needed language. In that particular strategy I found I was able, at least temporarily, to acquire language that I needed regardless of my feelings towards the culture. However, in my strategy of receptivity and in determining the ultimate success of the active strategy, my attitudes played a role in influencing my motivation and thus my acquisition. If my feelings towards the target culture were positive, then I was more likely to acquire the language. If, however, my feelings were negative, I would ignore input and not acquire. My rejection of the culture would inevitably lead to rejection of the language.

Strategies and Stages

I was able to identify two acquisition strategies based on learning preference and need and influenced by my feelings towards the target culture. My first strategy stems from my personal preference to be a receptive eavesdropper. I was able to identify a six-stage process of digesting peripheral input available at the edge of my attention. The six stages are awareness of input, attention to input, hypothesis formation, hypothesis testing, reinforcement, and acquisition and

retention.

I was also able to identify a five stage cycle for acquiring items of language which were needed. This strategy is generated from either survival needs or the need for personal expression. It differs from my recepive strategy in that I actively pursue language to meet my needs. The five stages in this cycle are inquiry, oral repetition for memorization, meaningful use, reinforcement, and acquisition.

I also discovered a final screen through which language to be acquired must pass. This saturation monitor is a protective device designed to limit the input being internalized at any one time. Its functions depend on time, circumstance, and interference from other second languages. It is also a component in my acquisition which I have been unable to find in the literature. While I feel confident that others may experience this phenomenon, it has thus far not been documented to my knowledge.

Other aspects of my acquisition of Bahasa Malaysia and Bahasa Indonesia appear to be new as well. First, I have been unable to find other introspective studies which focus on acquisition as it occurs in the environment without instruction. Another issue which may be new in my findings, is that although my acquisition of peripheral input is influenced by my attitudes, my acquisition of needed language seems to occur regardless of these same attitudes.

Active Pursuit of Needed Language and the Acculturation Model

John Schumann's acculturation model explains second language acquisition as it occurs in the environment, without classroom instruction. Schumann's premise in this model is that a learner will acquire a second language to the degree that that learner is able to acculturate with the target language group. It is the social and psychological distance or proximity of the learner to the target language group that determines the degree to which that learner acculturates. This degree of acculturation, in turn, dictates the degree to which the language is acquired. In the acculturation model, Schumann proposes that acculturation is the causal variable in second language acquisition. Schumann writes,

> Second language acquisition is just one aspect of acculturation and the degree to which a learner acculturates to the target language group will control the degree to which he acquires the second language.33

Schumann makes a distinction between two types of acculturation. The first, type one, occurs when the learner has integrated socially with the target language group to the extent that his contact is sufficient for acquisition. Type two acculturation has all the same qualities of type one, however, "the learner regards the TL speakers as a reference group whose life style and values he consciously or

33 Schumann, Acculturation Model, p. 34.

unconsciously desires to adopt."[34]

According to the acculturation model, my acquisition of Bahasa Malaysia and Bahasa Indonesia was natural second language acquisition. I acquired these languages by immersing myself in the environments without instruction. As in the acculturation model, my acquisition of peripheral input was indeed regulated by my attitudes towards the target language and culture. These attitudes of mine towards the target language group are among the the social variables affecting acculturation. In keeping with the acculturation model, these attitudes influenced the degree to which I integrated with the target language group. I found that when my attitudes were positive, I was able to integrate, acculturate, and hence acquire. On the other hand, if my attitudes were negative, it was very difficult to integrate, acculturate and acquire, and I rarely was able to do so.

This is not to say that acculturation should be equated entirely with integrative motivation. According to the acculturation model, a learner who has no positive attitudes towards the target culture can still acculturate if that learner <u>has to</u> integrate because of circumstance. It is through interaction that acculturation occurs. If the learner is an example of type one acculturation, need to integrate may be enough for acculturation to occur, regardless of that learner's feelings towards the target culture. Schumann

[34] Schumann, <u>Acculturation Model</u>, p. 29.

mentions that "positive attitudes help, but they are not necessary."[35]

My experience with active pursuit of needed language differs from type one acculturation, in that the need to meet immediate communication demands was not the result of a need to integrate. In fact, I found that my need for items of language would indeed enable me to acquire despite the fact that negative attitudes were preventing me from integrating and acculturating.

The language I acquired with this strategy was retained only as long as there was the need to use it. Once the need was no longer there, it seemed that my degree of acculturation determined whether the items of language would be acquired permanently. Although both my strategy of need and my degree of acculturation were instrumental in my acquisition, I feel that my strategy of actively pursuing needed language exists outside the acculturation model. I would argue that acculturation is necessary for permanent acquisition. In the interim, however, need dictates the extent to which a target language is acquired as much as acculturation.

The acculturation model is "an attempt to provide a social and psychological perspective on second-language acquisition."[36] My experience in acquiring Bahasa

[35] Comments received from John Schumann, August 27, 1987.

[36] Schumann, Acculturation Model, p. 50.

Malaysia and Bahasa Indonesia in the field was that these social and psychological factors were primary in determining my acquisition. I found, though, that in addition to these factors, there exists the issue of need to communicate and the degree to which language is acquired because of it. In my experience, both acculturation and the need to communicate dictated temporary acquisition. The ultimate acquisition of the target language, once there is no longer a need, is determined by these social and psychological factors, and the degree to which I can successfully acculturate.

Conclusion

It has been a personally rewarding and enriching experience to observe, document and report my second language acquisition experiences. The value of these experiences to the field lies in the introduction of my perspective on the language acquisition experience. It is my hope that my findings in this report coupled with the similar work of others will provide for some common elements in second language acquisition research. It is also my hope that my ideas will be further explored by other researchers and learners of second languages.

APPENDIX I

Below is a list of the original 59 words and/or phrases that I felt I knew before I entered the field in June 1986. These words were learned from some American friends in 1983, from Eko in the Fall of 1985, and in Eko's Indonesian class in May, 1986.

Indonesian	English Equivalent
apa kabar?	how are you?
baik	fine
bagus	great
tidak apa apa	it's nothing
matahari	sun (eye/day)
cepat-cepat	hurry up
jumpa lagi	see you later
cinta	love
saya	I/me
anda	you
mau	want
lupah	forget
cium	kiss
sayang	darling
ayam	chicken
anak	child
kendut	fat
kering/kerus	thin
ben	the way it is
kopi	coffee
susu	milk
hari	day
natal	Christmas
selemat pagi	good morning
siang	noon
sore	afternoon
malam	night
tidur	sleep

Indonesian	English Equivalent
senang	fun, enjoy
ini	this
itu	that
apa ka	what?
ngantuk	sleepy
lapar	hungry
lebih	more
mahal	expensive
berapa	how much?
siapa	who?
nama	name
buku	book
kota	city
satu	one
dua	two
tiga	three
empat	four
lima	five
enam	six
tuju	seven
delepan	eight
sembilan	nine
sepulu	ten
sebelas	eleven
ratus	hundred
ribu	thousand
juta	million

APPENDIX II

Examples of Cognates From Other Languages

I found in my acquisition of Bahasa Indonesia and Bahasa Malaysia, that the other languages I know were helpful in providing cognates and a sense of the word order. In addition to the cognates, the associations I make with sounds, symbols and words from any language help me to remember new vocabulary. In this Appendix, I will discuss the cognates that helped me in acquiring Bahasa Indonesia. This is because it was not until I arrived in Indonesia and began acquiring the language there, that I really noticed the role these cognates played in my acquisition.

Among the first foreign influences in Indonesia and Malaysia were the Chinese and the Sanskrit speaking Hindus of India. Both groups brought their languages and cultures to much of Southeast Asia from Thailand to Indonesia. There are words in Thai and Bahasa Malaysia/Indonesia, derived from Sanskrit, as well as Chinese, which are similar.

An example of a Thai/Bahasa Malaysia or Bahasa Indonesia cognate is the word for husband. In Thai it is samii in Indonesian it is suami. In addition to the cognates Thai provided, the two languages have very similar word order, even though Thai is a tonal language and Indonesian is not. Furthermore, because of the proximity of the two countries, many of the cultural concepts in the languages are similar, and having already learned Thai made learning Bahasa

Indonesia/Malaysia much easier.

The Portugese also influenced Indonesia. Because Portugese and Spanish are similar, I was immediately able to understand some of the Portugese words that had been incorporated into Indonesian. Two examples of Indonesian words of Portugese origin are meja for table and sepatu for shoe. In Spanish these words are mesa and zapatu.

The Dutch had a large impact on Indonesia due to their lengthy occupation of that country. Many words from Dutch were also incorporated into Indonesian. Some of these resemble English, French, and/or Spanish. An example of an English cognate is the word blus meaning blouse in English. A Dutch word that resembles French is the word for aunt, tante. The spelling is the same in both languages.

Occasionally, my familiarity with Japanese was also helpful. One example of a cognate Japanese provided me with in learning Javanese comes form the words in both languages for the number one. In Japanese the number one is ichi in Javanese it is shichi.

There were also occasions when I could apply a sound/symbol association from Japanese to Indonesian. Ika in Japanese means squid. Ikan in Indonesian means fish. Because the sounds are similar, and their meanings are also similar, I was able to remember the latter because of the former. This is not necessarily an example of a cognate, although it was also a factor in facilitating my acquisition of Bahasa Malaysia/Indonesia.

Finally, the closeness of Javanese and Indonesian helped me in learning both languages. Sometimes, I would learn the Javanese word first and then transfer it to Indonesian. At other times, the process was reversed. An example of two similar words is besok in Indonesian and sesok in Javanese, meaning tomorrow.

The cognates and associations that my other languages provided me with facilitated my acquisition of Bahasa Malaysia and Bahasa Indonesia. It was pleasurable for me to compare and draw from my previous languages. Sometimes, however, these cognates and word associations were a hinderance. I found that if I was feeling saturated with Bahasa Malaysia or Bahasa Indonesia, either the cognates, or a word from another language with a similar meaning to what I was trying to express in Bahasa Malaysia or Bahasa Indonesia, would come to mind instead. In this way, although generally knowing other languages helped, occasionally it would get in the way of my acquisition of Bahasa Indonesia or Bahasa Malaysia.

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