Grammar Module 1 (GM1)

Resource 3: Quotes about language learning

Quotes about language learning

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| Parents provide their children with genes as well as an environment, so the fact that talkative parents have kids with good language skills could simply mean that – and that the same genes that make parents talkative make children articulate. |
| We acquire the rules of language in a predictable order, some rules tending to come early and others late. The order does not appear to be determined by formal simplicity and there is evidence that it is independent of the order in which rules are taught in language classes. |
| If input is understood, and there is enough of it, the necessary grammar is automatically provided. The language teacher need not attempt deliberately to teach the next structure along with the natural order – it will be provided in just the right quantities and automatically reviewed if the student receives a sufficient amount of comprehensible input. |
| Universal Grammar is the black box responsible for language acquisition. It is the mechanism in the mind which allows children to construct a grammar out of the raw language materials supplied by their parents. |
| We know from the observation of many cases that the grammatical structure of the native language tends to be transferred to the foreign language… we have here the major source of difficulty or ease in learning the foreign language. |
| To learn a second language is to learn a skill, because various aspects of the task must be practised and integrated into fluent performance. |
| Behind words, there is the independent grammar of thought, the syntax of word meanings. |
| (Writing) is speech in thought and image only, lacking the musical, expressive, intonational qualities of oral speech. In learning to write, the child must disengage himself from the sensory aspect of speech and replace words by images of words – it is its abstract quality that is the main stumbling block to its use. |
| Language is a process of free creation; its laws and principles are fixed, but the manner in which the principles of generation are used is free and infinitely varied. Even the interpretation and use of words involves a process of free creation. |
| Foreign language learning must be concerned with reality: the reality of communication as it takes place outside the classroom and with the reality of learners as they exist outside and inside the classroom. |
| If we ask where, in the school curriculum, pupils are most directly challenged to resist peer-group pressure and to go beyond what is familiar and ‘with it’ in language use, the foreign language classroom must rate highly. The foreign language classroom is one sure place where, if the strange song is attractively presented, pupils can learn that the new, however strange, is worth exploring. |