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Special Feature

Looking Back, Looking Ahead: An Interview with Evelyn Hatch

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Profile

Evelyn Hatch began her studies at UCLA in the 1960s, completing, in fairly rapid succession, a BA in political science, an MA in linguistics and a Ph.D. in education. This broad academic background reflects Evelyn's long and successful career in applied linguistics, during which she researched, published and taught in many areas, most notably in second language acquisition, discourse analysis, psycholinguistics and research methodology. Evelyn's interests have also taken her around the world: one of her most frequent stops has been Cairo where she was awarded the Ain Shams University Medal for Service to English Language Teaching in Egypt on the occasion of the 10th anniversary of the Center for Developing English Language Teaching.

In 1977, Evelyn founded the Second Language Research Forum, the only major conference in our field organized entirely by graduate students. The 1989 SLRF Conference at UCLA was dedicated in her honor. Upon her retirement from UCLA's Department of TESL & Applied Linguistics in November 1989, past students and colleagues established the Evelyn Hatch Award for Excellence in Graduate Research at UCLA in recognition both of Evelyn's own influential research career and of the help and encouragement she has offered to all who have worked with her over the years.

IAL is therefore pleased that Evelyn Hatch agreed to be the subject of our first Special Features Interview and answer several questions that people have always wanted to ask her but never found the opportunity to do so. Early this year, students and colleagues at UCLA, as well as everyone on IAL's electronic mailing list, were invited to submit questions for this interview. We thank the respondents¹ for their suggestions which included questions concerning Evelyn's personal experiences, her view of applied linguistics as a researcher and her role as an educator for future researchers. The interview was conducted at UCLA on February 28, 1990.

Personal Experiences

IAL: If you had your career to do over again, would you have done it the same way? Would you have selected the same fields of research? Would you have chosen university teaching again? And what things might you have researched that you didn't?

Evelyn: For sure I wouldn't do the same thing over again. That would be too boring; to do anything over is boring. My favorite magazine is *Natural History*. It's got all these wonderful articles every month on different bugs and different birds and different people in different areas of the world. That's the kind of thing I would like to be able to do. Every time I read an issue I think, "Oh, I'd like to go off to wherever and study this."

When I first started teaching ESL, I thought that was very, very interesting because I had a chance to go overseas and to meet people who were really, really different and to learn about people and what they thought about life and how they lived. It's like doing ESL but still doing a lot of anthropology for myself.

I always thought that I would return to Egypt and run an ESL program. That would give me all kinds of time to go to the Sudan and study birds, or go to Mersa Matrouh and study weaving, or go to the Sewa Oasis and look at all of the old caves there. So I always thought that's what I would like to do. Somehow I didn't. It kind of didn't happen.

When I came here, I really enjoyed studying linguistics and learning about how different languages are and how they work. It was like puzzle-solving of a different kind. I liked going to school a lot. I don't think that I would probably do teacher training or research in applied linguistics again. I don't know if I'd do ESL teaching either, but I'd do a lot of travelling and other kinds of natural history things.

IAL: Within the field of applied linguistics are there any fields that you would have liked to research and you didn't?

Evelyn: Oh, lots. For everything that I've done there are always ten or fifteen other things that I would have liked to have looked at. But I would have preferred just to have travelled a lot and have a good time and not so much work. My own kinds of things.

IAL: Which of your own articles and/or books are you most pleased with?

Evelyn: I think I have two favorites. The first one is the first book that I did, *Second Language Acquisition: A Book of Readings*.² That's out of print now. I had been doing some work in first language acquisition, and I didn't know that there was anybody who looked at second language acquisition. So when I started finding things that people had done, it was just really exciting for me. And to put those all together and be able to share them with other people, I really enjoyed doing that. That was a lot of fun. The other favorite is the *Linguistics for Teachers*.³ Maybe I'll eventually get around to publishing those materials. The reason that I like them is that each was a chance to share my excitement in learning about languages and how languages work. So I'd say, those two things are my favorites.

IAL: Why do you think the reason is that you were so successful?

Evelyn: It's really hard to say. Coming to UCLA and meeting Russ [Campbell] made me really realize that I could do in ESL all the things that I wanted to do. I didn't do them, but that it would be possible to do them. Right after I got my MA in linguistics, he hired me for the summer to work on a Navajo reservation. That was just wonderful. And he made it possible for me to go back to Egypt for the Ain Shams project. I enjoyed that tremendously. The trips to China -- even though I didn't do any work -- were really great, too. It's been wonderful to work with him. He has such a tremendous amount of enthusiasm.

Innate curiosity is probably the thing that has made my career the most successful for me. I don't know whether it has made it successful for students, but that is what has made me stay in the field. Without that curiosity and also without Russ there as a model, I probably wouldn't have stayed in the field.

IAL: Has being a woman influenced your career?

Evelyn: Of course. Impossible that it couldn't. It was freeing in many ways but also very restricting in many ways to be a woman in the department and in the field. It was freeing in a sense that when I first started writing I wrote very much in the traditional kind of APA format and everything very dry. After I had done that a while I just

decided if I had to write that way, I didn't want to write. So I just went ahead and wrote about what I wanted to write about, and I wrote the way I wanted to write. I think everybody thought, "Well, that's Evelyn. She's a woman, and it doesn't really matter." But that's okay. But if I had been a man, I would have been criticized much more for my writing style. I got criticized, but the expectations of how men do research and how they write are different than those for women. That was a very freeing kind of thing.

But I think it was very restricting in a lot of different ways in terms of advancement. There are real demands that are put on female faculty that aren't put on male faculty. You're always supposed to be helpful. I felt bad if I wasn't helpful. Being a woman you think of your role more as supporting. There are a lot of times when you have other little things you want to do. I burned out pretty fast because I was doing everybody's statistics and typing people's theses. I really did a lot of stupid things. Also I think as a woman I didn't feel I was just free to go whenever I wanted to, and that's hard when you want to go places and do things.

Viewing Applied Linguistics as a Researcher

IAL: What's the biggest mistake the field of applied linguistics has ever made?

Evelyn: I don't think that our field has made any huge mistakes. I think it has come close to it a couple of times when people were really pressing to have *one* sort of standardized received theory of language acquisition or one sort of narrow way of doing research -- that all research should be of a certain sort. But we have withstood that every time. So I don't really see that it's been a big problem. I think there have been a couple of times when people went to the Kuhnian notion of revolution of science and thought there has to be a theory, and then we modify it. I don't think that's true. There were a couple of times when people said, "Okay we should all be working towards one central theory. We should all be doing X because linguistics is doing that," that we should be like that. But people have said, "Oh that's not so interesting." Then they have gone off and done a lot of other interesting things. It has always worked out okay.

IAL: What do you see as trends in the short-term and long-range future?

Evelyn: What I see happening is a lot of interest, at least I think it's interesting, in modelling learning and language processing. If we were successful in setting up computer modelling of, say, individual speech events, and if we can model lessons and model parts of the language, then we can also model lessons and model teaching. We could have a theory, then, that would include teaching within it or at least show what kinds of teaching assist learning. If we really had computerized lessons, we could test how people learn particular things by varying those factors on the computer. We could test a lot of our ideas about teaching and how they fit into the learning process. Computer technology -- I really sound like a technocrat! Horwitz⁴ did a questionnaire for Americans learning foreign languages at different universities. The study looked at what students said was the most difficult thing for them. For them it was anxiety and having to fit right in to what the lesson was. With really sophisticated computer lessons you can have individualized, customized lessons where there isn't any pressure on the learner. You could do all kinds of things that reflect parts of theories and integrate teaching and learning and theory all together. I think that's what's going to happen.

IAL: Do you think we could come close to simulating with a computer how the learner learns?

Evelyn: It depends on how sophisticated it gets. If you can't get enough different things going on at once, then I don't know if you will be able to or not. But if you get a really sophisticated model -- computers can handle parallel processing of lots of different kinds of information -- so you can move one kind of thing or do another thing and see what effect it has. I think that will happen eventually. Probably it will take a long time, but that's what I'd like to see. With computer-assisted instruction we could do all kinds of research on scaffolding. We could look at the effect of teaching much, much more than we have done so far. I think that would be really helpful to do something like that.

IAL: Is there someone, or some group, or some line of investigation that second language acquisition research should be paying more attention to or maybe less?

Evelyn: I think that we ought to be watching what Mike Gasser is doing. He's doing some work now on acquisition of rhythm in languages. Since rhythm and intonation seem to be among the very first things that children learn in first language acquisition, it would be really interesting to look at that, the effect of differences in rhythm across languages and the acquisition process. In fact, Martha Pennington gave a great paper on this at SLRF.⁵ I'd like to see a lot more work done on everyday metaphor also because our language is so filled with it. Looking at that cross-culturally would be very interesting, too.

IAL: Is there anything we should be doing less?

Evelyn: No. I think all research is useful. A lot of it I don't find attractive to me personally, but I think it is to others, and so anything that we do is worth doing.

IAL: Matthew Schall has a very interesting question on theory generation for you. "Historians of science often present the following model of the evolution of scientific method in a given field. First, there is description. Second, there is the application of simple mathematical models. These are invariably linear or additive and are usually initially considered sufficient for all cases. Third, after much acrimonious debate in the field's journals, more sophisticated models that accommodate non-linear or other unique characteristics in the field's data are developed." Matthew sees applied linguistics moving on from Step 2 to Step 3. What do you think?

Evelyn: I think it's a good idea, it's right on. But I don't see these steps as being steps that once you move to the next one you throw away the first step, or throw away the second one once you get to the third. Certainly we have learned a lot in the beginning by doing observational studies and collecting data and writing descriptions. We learned a lot from that, and we will continue to learn a lot from that.

After that, people became very much interested in a linear additive model. They were looking at lots of case studies and asking, "Is there a universal order in which things are learned?" There is a lot of interest in language testing, too, and people are wondering, "Are there many different dimensions to language learning or is there a one-factor solution?" They always come up

with a one-factor solution which masks the third non-linear kind of thing. But that's exactly what people *have* been trying to do: "Is there an order of acquisition for phonology, for syntax, for whatever -- is there some order and is it a universal order? When you find variation, then how do you account for it?" People are doing that, and that's a very helpful second step.

We have moved into the third area -- without acrimony -- which is really the notion of things being so multi-faceted that it's almost impossible to talk about linear ordering; that things are multi-dimensional and that, as you shift focus in your speaking, or in your processing, or in your learning, then different things come to the fore instead of others. In the talk I'm giving at TESOL,⁶ I'm trying to use a metaphor which is very easy to understand. If you think of all the different areas in language -- like the structure of conversation, the structure of an interview like this, the structure of phonology, of lexicon and so on -- if you think of those all as a whole series of overhead transparencies with the light shining through, you're constantly shifting and moving them as you're trying to bring one or another part into focus. You're not attending to them all in the same way all the time, but they're constantly shifting. So a learner who's learning a language is trying to handle *all* of that, too.

So when you look at linearity (this is the order in which morphemes are learned or phonological features are learned or whatever), that's not what the learner is doing. If we want a theory that is going to look at real language performance as well as comprehension, then we need a much more sophisticated model and certainly a more sophisticated model in terms of statistics, too. Linear models just aren't going to do it. Matthew is exactly right. The only thing that's different is that I don't think that because you move from 1 to 2 it means that 1 is no longer of value, and moving from 2 to 3 means 2 is no longer of value. All are valuable. We can look at a very broad perspective or we can look at a very small part, and both of those are very valuable things to do. We can still do diary studies, too. I think we can still learn a lot from research at all three stages.

IAL: What psychological or social theory or philosophical model do you consider your work to be based on? Or is it grounded in your own empirical research and honed intuitions?

Evelyn: I'm really not sure. I have never really thought about where it fits, but I think maybe with Vygotsky, maybe Malinowski, maybe Bruner some, but I never really thought, "Okay, well, I like what so-and-so does, and I'm going to do this because it fits in with the way they view language." When you're doing empirical research you are also honing your intuition, and so it has to be both. Vygotsky has talked a lot about how teachers or parents help other people learn. Any theory of language learning has to include that in it somewhere. The work on foreigner talk is something like that; so is Barbara Hawkins's work on scaffolding.⁷ I like a lot of Bruner's ideas because he is willing to push experience and interaction as much as possible to see how much of language learning it will allow us to account for, rather than just saying, "Everything is innate," where you can't do anything about it. He has really said that teaching, whether it is from parents or whoever, formal or informal, is an important part of the process. So I like his work very much.

Educating Future Researchers

IAL: You are also an educator, and you did a lot of work helping graduate students. Do you have a philosophy that guides you in training future researchers?

Evelyn: I don't know [laughing]. I have thought about this question a lot, and I think that I have been successful in getting researchers to see that good design and appropriate statistics increase our confidence in claims that we make. I think that is something that Anne [Lazaraton] and I, in our research manual,⁸ have done a pretty good job on. I think that goal has been met.

But I have been a failure in a second kind of goal, and that is trying to get students to think of research as a discovery process rather than a product that you're going to publish. The statistical tools that you acquire will always help you see how much is left that you haven't accounted for, and that should raise awareness that there is no single answer, no answers that don't interact with other answers, and that answers can lead you on to even more interesting areas of investigation. Research is a discovery process. It's a discovery adventure. *That* I haven't been able to communicate very well to people. I think that's too bad.

I've had some other students who really view research in applied linguistics like engineering: you have a problem and you work out the best way to solve that problem. I know Brina [Peck]

is like that, and Larry Hunt is a person who's been like that. So it has always been a goal-driven kind of research, but I think that comes from them, not from me. There have been a lot of really good students in the program who have that kind of view of research, and they have done very very well.

We've done well in training people in research design and statistics. But the other part I don't know. Maybe I just don't see it. I don't see students getting all excited and saying, "Oh, wow!" and "This didn't work. Wonderful! I've got ten more ideas, and I'm gonna go out and do them." Everybody is working on their time pressures, publication pressures, grade pressures. What research is really about gets lost in that process.

I have had so many MA students come in and just be almost in tears because their research hasn't worked out, rather than saying, "Oh, this has been a wonderful process. It didn't work out, but it's been a process that let me learn about A and B and C, and I learned it," "I can gather data from kids," or "I've learned how to work with teachers who let me into their classroom to see what's going on," "I've been able to interview students and do it well." But they see that they didn't get what they expected to get, and they are real disappointed, and I think that's too bad. They think their work is worthless. They look at the product, and it isn't a perfect product, and so they're real upset. They are never thinking, "What was the process that I have been through? What did I learn from that process?"

I really think people ought to be motivated by what they want to do; that you ought to have your own motivation, and I know that in my teaching a lot of students have said, "Well, you didn't tell me whether you liked something or didn't like something." It's like, "*I'm* not your mother, you know. Did *you* like it? Did *you* learn something? What did *you* get out of it?" And that's what all of education is supposed to be about. It's not supposed to be pleasing your teacher, pleasing your mother. There ought to be a way of really improving people's intrinsic motivation -- Why did they get in to the program? What do they want to do? Why do they want to do it? -- and make it as interesting as possible for them. Give them a chance to do whatever they want to do. That's why the field should be broad. Everybody should get to do something of value.

IAL: Well, it's been a pleasure, Evelyn. Thank you.

Maria M. Egbert, *IAL's* Special Features Editor, is a Ph.D. student in applied linguistics at UCLA. She has an MA in Foreign Language Education from the University of Georgia, Athens and an MA in German as a Foreign Language from the University of Bielefeld in the Federal Republic of Germany. Her current research interests include second language acquisition and conversational analysis.

Notes

¹Marsha Bensoussan, Marianne Celce-Murcia, Andrew Cohen, Grant Henning, Larry Hunt, Robert Kirsner, Martha Pennington, Matthew Schall, Meryl Siegal.

²Hatch, E. (1978). *Second language acquisition: A book of readings*. New York: Newbury House.

³Hatch, E. Unpublished materials for Introductory Linguistics course (Linguistics 100) at UCLA.

⁴Horwitz, E.K. (1989). Recent research on second language learners: Beliefs and anxiety. In D. Koike & A. Simoes (Eds.). *Negotiating for meaning: Papers on foreign language teaching and evaluation*. Austin: University of Texas, Department of Foreign Language Education Studies.

⁵Pennington, M. (1990). Universals, prosody and second language acquisition: The context of phonological development. 10th Annual Second Language Research Forum. Eugene, Oregon.

⁶Hatch, E. (1990). Integrating theory. 24th Annual TESOL Conference. San Francisco.

⁷Hawkins, B. (1988). *Scaffolded classroom interaction & its relation to second language acquisition for language minority children*. Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, UCLA.

⁸Hatch, E. & Lazaraton, A. (in press). *The research manual: Design and statistics for applied linguistics*. New York: Newbury House.

Special Features Announcement

The Special Features section of *IAL* is intended to encourage direct professional communication and exchange on state-of-the-art issues in applied linguistics. There will be two main types of features:

Interviews

From time to time we will interview key figures in our field and elicit candid views on their careers and on developments in applied linguistics. For our inaugural issue, we interviewed Evelyn Hatch who recently retired from UCLA. Questions for the interview were solicited from colleagues via electronic mail (BITNET). Readers who would like their names added to our electronic mailing list so as to participate in future interviews may send their electronic addresses to: IHW1037@UCLAMVS. Upcoming interviews will be announced in future issues.

Roundtables

Roundtables will provide a forum for our readers to respond to philosophical and theoretical questions which ultimately affect how we do applied linguistics and how we might do applied linguistics in the future. As in this first issue, questions for upcoming roundtables will be announced in the journal. Readers, especially student readers, are encouraged to respond. Readers may also send in suggestions for interview subjects and roundtable questions. Please address all suggestions to the Special Features Editor.

Call for Contributions to *IAL's* First Roundtable

Our next issue will feature readers' responses to the following questions:

**What is applied linguistics?
What should applied linguistics be?**

Responses must not exceed 500 words and should be postmarked no later than September 30, 1990. Please include a separate 50-word bio-statement.