

Tennis is another complex skill that is apparently better acquired than learned. Gallwey's excellent book The Inner Game of Tennis (1974) has, I think, exactly this thesis. Gallwey represents acquisition and learning as Self 1 and Self 2:

". . . the key to better tennis--or better anything--lies in improving the relationship between the conscious teller, Self 1, and the unconscious doer, Self 2." (p. 26)

Self 1 often takes a very explicit form, as Gallwey notes:

"Listen to the way players talk to themselves on the court: 'Come on, Tom, meet the ball in front of you.' . . . Who is telling who what? . . . One, the 'I,' seems to be giving instructions; the other, 'myself,' seems to perform the action. Then 'I' returns with an evaluation of the action." (p. 25)

In our terms, Gallwey seems to feel that many tennis players are "over-users." They work Self 1 too hard and do not allow the natural acquisition process to internalize the complex skill of tennis. Typical complaints of the over-user are similar for tennis and second language:

**From: Krashen, S. 1978. ESL as post-critical period learning
MEXTESOL Journal 2: 13-24. Reprinted as "Adult second
language acquisition as post-critical period learning" in ITL
Review of Applied Linguistics 43: 39-52.**

" 'It's not that I don't know what to do, it's that I don't do what I know!' Other common complaints that come constantly to the attention of the tennis pro:

When I'm practicing, I play very well, but when I get into a match, I fall apart.

When I'm really trying hard to do the stroke the way it says to do in the book, I flub the shot every time. When I concentrate on one thing I'm supposed to be doing, I forget something else." (p. 17).

The correlate of these observations in second language is familiar: The over-user may know the rules, do well on (slow) tests, but be unable to consciously control all aspects of grammar when using the second language in ordinary contexts.

Tennis lessons, like second language classes where undue emphasis is on form, are typically addressed to the monitor, or self 1. Consider Gallwey's description of a "typical tennis Lesson":

". . . The pro is standing at the net with a large bucket of balls, and being a bit uncertain whether his student is considering him worth the lesson fee, he is carefully evaluating every shot. 'That's good, but you're rolling your racket face over a little on your follow-through, Mr. Weill. Now shift your weight onto your front foot as you step into the ball . . . Now you're taking your racket back too late . . . Your backswing should be a little lower on the last shot . . . That's it, much better.' Before long, Mr. Weill's mind is churning with six thoughts about what he should be doing and sixteen thoughts about what he shouldn't be doing. Improvement seems dubious and very complex, but both he and the pro are impressed by the careful analysis of each stroke and the fee is gladly paid upon receipt of the advice to 'practice all this, and eventually you'll see a big improvement.'" (p. 18).

Like many mediocre second language teachers, I have taught this way, impressing both myself and my students with my detailed and careful analyses of the intricacies of English grammar. One thing I noted, however, was that many of my students were having "Eureka" experiences-I was supplying a conscious rule that corresponded to tacit knowledge they already had, similar to what happens to native speakers who study the linguistic structure of their own language. My students were satisfied and pleased with this new knowledge, and it seemed to give them a great sense of security. I was, in these cases, however, teaching linguistics and not language.

Before proceeding to a discussion of one of these careful analyses, let me first present my own case. About ten years ago, I became interested in the Martial Arts, another popular form of post-critical period learning. My failure, I now believe, was due to two factors, one related to learning and one to acquisition. First, I thought I would progress solely by learning: I analyzed every step of every movement, focussed entirely on form, and found myself unable to perform with any speed or agility. Second, I did not get as much input as my more successful classmates. Many of the others clearly enjoyed fighting more than I did. They saw Bruce Lee movies. They stayed around the gym after the lesson, casually watching advanced students sparring. They sparred with each other, something which I avoided, both for fear of getting hurt and for fear of practicing errors. When I practiced, I carefully went over the moves step by step, and tried to avoid errors. My classmates were apparently unworried about their errors and felt their mistakes would work themselves out. In terms of the model, I over-relied on learning and denied acquisition. I had no faith in the acquisition process, and did not provide myself with suitable environments so that acquisition could take place. Most martial arts skills are simply too complex to be learned, and must be acquired, and I did not recognize this. (For discussion of the notions "easy" and "difficult" and their relation to acquisition and learning, see Reber, 1976, and Krashen, Butler, Birnbaum, and Robertson, 1976).

Tennis is another complex skill that is apparently better acquired than learned. Gallwey's excellent book The Inner Game of Tennis (1974) has, I think, exactly this thesis. Gallwey represents acquisition and learning as Self 1 and Self 2:

". . . the key to better tennis--or better anything--lies in improving the relationship between the conscious teller, Self 1, and the unconscious doer, Self 2." (p. 26)

Self 1 often takes a very explicit form, as Gallwey notes:

"Listen to the way players talk to themselves on the court: 'Come on, Tom, meet the ball in front of you.' . . . Who is telling who what? . . . One, the 'I,' seems to be giving instructions; the other, 'myself,' seems to perform the action. Then 'I' returns with an evaluation of the action." (p. 25)

In our terms, Gallwey seems to feel that many tennis players are "over-users." They work Self 1 too hard and do not allow the natural acquisition process to internalize the complex skill of tennis. Typical complaints of the over-user are similar for tennis and second language:

The acquisition process in tennis is described by Gallwey as follows:

"There is a far more natural and effective process for learning and doing almost anything than most of us realize. It is similar to the process we all used, but soon forgot, as we learned to walk and talk. It uses the so-called unconscious mind more than the deliberate 'self-conscious' mind . . . This process doesn't have to be learned; we already know it." (p. 13).

Acquired performance is best revealed in tennis, as in second language performance, when the Monitor is not able to intrude, that is, when there is no time for it to intrude, or when the conscious mind is somehow "stilled":

"In rare moments, tennis players approach . . . unthinking spontaneity. These moments seem to occur most frequently when players are volleying back and forth at the net. Often the exchange of shots at such close quarters is so rapid that action faster than thought is required. These moments are exhilarating, and the players are often amazed to find that they make perfect shots they didn't even expect to reach . . . they have no time to plan; the perfect shot just comes." (p. 32).

Also, "the player's mind can become "so concentrated, so focused, that it is still. It becomes one with what the body is doing, and the unconscious or automatic functions are working without interference from thoughts . . ." (p. 21). In this state the player "is not aware of giving himself a lot of instructions, thinking about how to hit the ball, how to correct past mistakes or how to repeat what he just did. He is conscious, but not thinking, not over-trying . . . The 'hot streak' usually continues until he starts thinking about it and tries to maintain it; as soon as he attempts to exercise control, he loses it." (p.20).

When acquisition, rather than learning of tennis is allowed to occur, Gallwey says that we see errors correcting themselves naturally (assuming, of course, that self 1 = learning and self 2 = acquisition). Errors are best interpreted as part of the development process, something to observe but not to identify with. This is precisely what is said about errors in first language acquisition, and several scholars, especially Corder (1976), have made similar comments about errors in second language performance.