



Barry McLaughlin, Lily Wong Fillmore, Susan Ervin-Tripp, and Lynne Hansen

Second Language Acquisition Scholars Speak at BYU-HC

by Lynne Hansen

Three internationally recognized scholars in the field of second language acquisition, Susan Ervin-Tripp and Lily Wong Fillmore (University of California, Berkeley) and Barry McLaughlin (University of California, Santa Cruz), joined in a forum at Brigham Young University—Hawaii Campus on April 30.

The theme of the program was "Individual and Cultural Differences in Second Language Learning." In introducing the topic, Fillmore described the ongoing research projects being conducted by the group at the University of California at Berkeley. In order to make the discussion more relevant to the faculty and students in attendance, Ervin-Tripp invited observations from the audience on characteristics of learners which appear to enhance lan-

guage acquisition. Issues raised in this interchange then became the focus of subsequent remarks by the visiting scholars.

Through the ensuing discussion it became clear that the learner characteristics listed by the group (e.g., gregariousness, motivation, assertiveness) may interact in varied and interesting ways in individuals, and their associations with effective language learning are not simple ones. For example, the Berkeley research shows that a gregarious person is not necessarily a better language learner than a less talkative one. There are different kinds of good language learners, different approaches for learning a language quickly and well. Perhaps the most essential element in the process is motivation to learn and interact in the new language. What people do with the

motivation, however, varies between individuals.

The forum underlined the enormous task of the second language teacher as he or she is faced with facilitating learning for a myriad of learner types. Needed in meeting this challenge is increased awareness and understanding of individual, group, and situational variables and how they interact in language learning.

While in Laie the California visitors, accompanied by six of their graduate research assistants from Berkeley, consul-

ted with the research team investigating cultural differences in language learning at Brigham Young University-Hawaii Campus. Directed by Lynne Hansen, the research examines cognitive and social characteristics of students from Pacific and Asian cultures who are enrolled at the English Language Institute at BYU-HC. These cognitive and social variables will be related to the learners' progress in various English language skills in an attempt to more clearly delineate the effects of individual and cultural differences on second language learning outcomes.