○ M. GARCÍA MAYO, M. GUTIERREZ MANGADO, & M. MARTÍNEZ ADRIÁN, (EDS.), *CONTEMPORARY APPROACHES TO SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION*

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This timely edition is the 9th volume in the AILA Applied Linguistics Series which offers a comprehensive account of the main theories in second language acquisition (SLA) and complements the plethora of resources available for researchers and graduate students working in this field. The book begins with an introduction and a foreword, both providing a background and a very interesting orientation to the book. The book contains eleven chapters, which use empirical studies to highlight their respective contributions towards understanding L2 acquisition and informing pedagogy, and an afterword.

Chapter 1 presents a generativist perspective in explaining what is difficult for non-native speakers to learn in the target language. In this chapter, Slabakova proposes the Bottleneck Hypothesis and maintains that functional morphology is the most difficult feature to learn, resulting in a 'bottleneck' in SLA. The reason for this, she suggests, is that while syntactic operations are universal, functional morphology is a feature that differs between languages. Interpreting the results from White (2003), Slabakova argues against the proposition that morphology drives syntactic acquisition. She demonstrates that errors in the area of functional morphology persist even beyond the beginner level and can still be evidenced in intermediate learners, hence illustrating its relative difficulty. However, since functional morphology is the channel through which learners acquire syntax and meaning in the target language, more attention should be given to research in this area. She also suggests that classroom practice can be aligned with drills on functional morphology in its most unambiguous context to help learners overcome this bottleneck in SLA.

Llinares reviews the two models of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) in Chapter 2. She juxtaposes Halliday's (1975) functional model with genre and register theory, mentioning that the latter is more widely applied in second language (L2) educational contexts. By reviewing studies that looked into young learners' L2 use and development, the author claims that it is essential to identify learners' progression in terms of their lexico-grammar development to aid a more successful functional use in SLA. Proposing that cross disciplinary approaches which combine SFL with other areas like conversation analysis (CA), sociolinguistics and corpus linguistics may have the potential to offer a more comprehensive account of language use and

learning, Llinares concludes the chapter by offering some pedagogical implications of SFL application into SLA instructional contexts and encourages more interdisciplinary studies to be attempted in the future.

Chapter 3 elaborates on the Interactionist model and begins by offering a chronological account on the development of main theories about learner interaction. In this chapter, Pica not only highlights some key terminology in this research stream but also summarises the findings from empirical studies. She argues that learner interaction plays a very important role in SLA to help learners confirm the evidence they notice in the input and hence help shape their interlanguage. She emphasises that research in this area has contributed to expanding the theory in SLA and has offered empirical evidence on the value of learner interaction.

Chapter 4 begins by offering a historical overview of the development of Skill Acquisition Theory and reviewing research that supports this theory. In this chapter, Lyster and Sato demonstrate that learners' declarative and procedural knowledge forming procedures are not always unidirectional and advocate that contextualised and systematic practice can promote L2 development and benefit learners in proceduralising their knowledge. However, they suggest that more studies are to be attempted before a more comprehensive account of the most effective practice in classroom settings can be formulated.

In a similar fashion, chapter 5 examines the importance and contribution of Input Processing Theory. In this chapter, Benati gives a comprehensive summary of the main tenets of the theory as well as the principles and sub-principles it encompasses. In reviewing empirical studies that support this theory, Benati emphasises the roles of input and grammar instruction in SLA and highlights the importance of situating them in a more meaningful communicative context. Benati advocates that research in this area offers valuable insights into how learners handle and process input despite the fact that the focus is only directed to a singular aspect of SLA.

Chapter 6 illustrates a psycholinguistic approach to SLA and uses Processability Theory (PT) to account for developmental sequences. Supported by cross-linguistic evidence, Håkansson suggests that there are universal procedures underlying learners' processing of L2. She acknowledges the existence of transfer at all levels of language and explores how it is situated in developmental sequences. Håkansson emphasizes that PT is not language-specific and works well with a diverse range of languages. The author finally suggests that PT can be a useful approach in gauging development by functioning as a profiling instrument.

Shifting from the internal processes of SLA towards a more externally embedded sociocultural account, Chapter 7 explores the perspective of Sociocultural Theory (SCT) and research in this area. Viewing SLA as a process of internalising social use of language, Gánem-Gutiérrez proposes that having the learners involved in social activities will help their language develop. The author demonstrates that the SCT radical views have challenged the commonly adopted explanation on the nature of L2 knowledge and offered more insights into

the process of development. However, Gánem-Gutiérrez also points out the drawbacks in this line of research, being the very nature of its methodological approaches but suggests potential in future research to enhance the practical values and implications in pedagogy.

Chapter 8 looks into the contributions of research into native oral production and the study of SLA. Formulating their arguments from the usage-based perspectives, Weinert, Basterrechea and García Mayo suggest that research into this area deserves more attention given its potential to inform L2 development. The authors emphasise that research needs to align with Corpus Linguistics and overcome the challenges posed by both transcriptions and segmentations of oral data. Summarising the findings from the currently available studies, Weinert, Basterrechea and García Mayo propose that oral proficiency is better measured as 'the achievement of discourse-pragmatics' (p.172) via context-relevant choices.

Viewing language acquisition and use as dynamics, both Chapter 9 and Chapter 10 attempt to offer a novel perspective to account for phenomena in SLA. Li and Zhao discuss learning dynamics from the perspective of connectionism in Chapter 9 and explore the issue of bilingualism with regard to the age of acquisition and mental representations of language. The computational models presented in this chapter demonstrate the advantages this approach has to offer to the SLA research, that is, the possibility of systematic variable manipulation. These models support empirical studies in the sense that, while the models need to be fine-tuned as a result of new empirical evidence, their results can inform empirical studies.

Chapter 10 offers Dynamic Systems Theory (DST) as a meta-theory to account for issues in SLA. By illustrating how DST accommodates studies of different scales and how it is compatible with most of the main stream theories in the field, de Bot, Lowie, Thorne and Verspoor propose that DST is a very strong candidate to serve as an overarching meta-theory and offer a comprehensive account of the long-debated issues in SLA.

Chapter 11 offers a neurobiological perspective on language processing and argues that the current level of event-related brain potential (ERP) research has been able to capture the cognitive differences in language processing. Sabourin, Brien and Tremblay argue that such use of electrophysiology offers some advantages into language study, one of which being its better sensitivity than the more commonly used behavioural tests. With the applications of ERP in the study of L2 lexical and sentence processing, the results are very promising and offer a novel understanding about neurophysiological processes. The authors suggest the future potential of incorporating ERP to help synthesise the currently divergent findings within SLA research.

This book concludes with an afterword by Rothman and VanPatten which summarises both the main issues addressed and the contributions made by the various theories presented in this book. It also points out the need for future research to create a bigger picture of SLA and encourages studies from different frameworks and perspectives to contribute towards a more

comprehensive understanding of SLA. Overall this book is very well balanced and highlights many different perspectives in SLA. It is a thorough reference and valuable resource not only for researchers and graduate students, but will also be of interest to newcomers in SLA studies as it provides a comprehensive and historical account of the development of the theories and research in the field.

REFERENCES

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