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Edited by

ZhaoHong Han

In collaboration with

Eun Sung Park, Andrea Révész, Charles Combs
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Preface

The field of second language acquisition (SLA) research, since its inception, has been inextricably intertwined with pedagogical concerns. For many, if not all, researchers, the goal of SLA research is to produce insights and develop instructional strategies that may eventually improve the efficacy and efficiency of learning, something that learners at large have proven to be lacking. Although numerous strategies have indeed been developed over the years, the empirical research that has undergirded them, in the main, enacts and perpetuates a tradition that values learning as a product rather than a process. In that vein, the efficacy of the strategies has been construed and/or measured in terms of overtly manifested – oftentimes, superficial and form-oriented – changes in learners' behaviour (cf. Philp, 2003; Truscott, 1998). Often, though not always, statistical results are adduced to support one strategy over another. Individual-level, qualitative analyses of the linguistic data are, on the other hand, sparse, but when and where such analyses are undertaken, the results tend to show divergence rather than convergence (cf. Bardovi-Harlig, 2006a; Ellis & Larsen-Freeman, 2006; Larsen-Freeman, 2006a). The overall understanding that then ensues is one replete with contingency – the strategies are helpful for some learners but not for others, or they are helpful sometimes but not always. Nothing conclusive can therefore be said about any of them, and speculations have come in abundance.

Some of the speculations have even turned into clichés. For example, nowadays it is often said that second language (L2) learning is 'a complex enterprise'. Another impending cliché is that it is learners themselves, and not any external agents (i.e. a teacher, a researcher, or a textbook developer), who control the learning process. Importantly, such clichés are vacuous, empirically, for there has been little direct empirical proof of them. As a result of the product orientation in research referred to above, there has been a persistent absence in the literature of a fine-grained understanding of many fundamental issues pertaining to L2

learning as a process. These issues include, but are not limited to, the following:

- the genesis and ontogenesis of linguistic and metalinguistic abilities;
- the extent to which a multilingual mind influences cognition in general, and the processing of L2 input and generation of output in particular;
- the process by which learning transfers from one context to another;
- the extent to which L1 interferes with L2 meaning – form mapping;
- the extent to which learner attention can be externally manipulated;
- the default process and strategies by which learners analyse input;
- learners' working memory capacity for processing input for form and meaning;
- the extent to which Universal Grammar (UG) constrains the processing of grammatical ambiguity;
- the extent to which tasks differ in identifying metalinguistic ability;
- the extent to which various aspects of L2 (e.g. prosodic features, pragmatic formulas) are acquired;
- the relationship between perception and production.

This book tackles these issues and many more, through theoretical analyses and/or empirical research. The book contains eleven chapters, the first four of which are conceptually orientated and the remaining seven of which are empirical studies, conducted with a variety of target languages, including Korean, Chinese, Spanish, French, English, and Japanese, and with hearing and/or deaf learners. Although not a comprehensive treatment of process in L2 learning, as the title of the book indicates, the book provides much food for thought, particularly for second language instruction. Each chapter conveys a message for classroom learning, but the messages are not always consistent. This scenario aptly mirrors the diversity of current convictions about what would bring about the most effective instruction, and it, in turn, points to the need to increase the amount of further, systematic research by both researchers and practitioners.

Since Corder's (1967) seminal distinction between input and intake, it has never been clearer that instruction cannot be effective unless it directly addresses learners' processing needs (e.g. Doughty, 2001, 2003; VanPatten, 1996, 2004a). Doughty (2003: 298) has convincingly argued that 'the goal of L2 instruction should be to organise the processing space to enable [learners] to notice the cues located in the input ...'. Even so, exactly what that entails and how that may be achieved in the classroom requires concerted effort to elaborate. This book, at it were, provides a point of departure for the collective endeavour.

The book resonates with an increasingly stronger call from the ‘applied linguistics quarter’ of SLA research for a paradigmatic shift from product to process. Ellis and Larsen-Freeman (2006a) have emphasised:

[A]ttested data cannot tell us what transpired in the language up until the construction of the text, nor where it is destined. While this may seem obvious, and forgivable, from a complexity theory perspective, by limiting our investigations to attested language, we miss the perceptually changing, perceptually dynamic nature of language.

In her recent paper in *Applied Linguistics*, Larsen-Freeman (2006a) underscores the need for researchers to adopt an ‘emic’ perspective on second language development (cf. Hauser, 2005) and provides a clear demonstration of the level and depth of understanding that may result from pursuing a focus on the learner rather than on the target language. This is doubtless a promising direction for future research to take.

Along a similar line, many authors in this book have pleaded earnestly for longitudinal research to document the dynamics of the L2 process. In light of the currently abundant cross-sectional research, it appears that cross-sectional research, although capable of capturing group tendencies, is inadequate to reveal the multifaceted complexity of the learning process per se, unless it is balanced by ontogenetic research. Although many of the logistics of the learning process tend to be ‘eclipsed’ in phylogenetic research, they can be elucidated by research examining learners as individuals (Bardovi-Harlig, 2006). It follows, then, that not only should case studies be promoted in future SLA research, but a within-group design must also be encouraged in group-based research.

This book would not have been possible without the dedicated work of its authors and their cooperation and patience with the process. We are indebted to them all. Our thanks also go to the reviewers, whose critical feedback and constructive comments are essential in helping authors achieve and maintain clarity. Lastly, we wish to express our appreciation to Michael Feyen and Kristen Loesch at Teachers College, Columbia University and Tommi Grover (and his colleagues) at Multilingual Matters for their support and efficiency.

The book is intended for second language researchers, graduate students, and bilingual and/or second language practitioners.

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Andrea Révész, Charles Combs, and Ji Hyun Kim)
New York

Chapter 1

Revisiting the Role of Consciousness with MOGUL

MICHAEL SHARWOOD SMITH

Thirty years of research has not produced any really hard evidence that making people aware of formal features of the second language (L2) has any significant long-term effect on their grammatical development. However, people still have a persistent feeling that metalinguistic ability in the L2 is more than just a luxury extra or, viewed more pessimistically, more than a distraction and an encumbrance. It is surely a prerequisite for any proper research into such issues that we have a much more fine-grained explanation of the mechanisms involved in metalinguistic ability than has been the case so far. At the least, we need to develop a coherent theoretical model of this ability that we can use to generate interesting research questions about such issues as input enhancement (see Berent & Kelly, this volume) and focus on form (see Han, this volume). You might say that, although there has been no dearth of empirical research, not all that much has happened in this theoretical arena since the 1970s. The MOGUL¹ framework being developed by Sharwood Smith and Truscott aims, among other things, to rekindle the search for more coherent conceptualisations of the problems involved.

MOGUL is a processing model that is devised in such a way as to engage coherently with research across a variety of domains. Following proposals by Ray Jackendoff, it involves a recognition of the existence of a separate, modular language faculty, containing the core phonological and syntactic systems. It also recognises the crucial importance of 'conceptual structure', which includes the vital semantic and pragmatic dimensions of language that, in this framework, lie outside this core and allow for the possibility of conscious introspection. In fact, it is in the conceptual domain that metalinguistic ability is anchored, allowing the language user to construct fragmentary or even quite sophisticated