REVIEWS

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In this volume Brumfit provides a detailed, yet highly readable, analysis of many problems that at least partially arise from viewing language as a static code. He describes language as a dynamic force that interacts with other social forces and practices and as a process that is permeable, variable, and useful. He argues that the best way to teach, research, and plan language policy is to recognize and enhance the users’ abilities to use language for their own permeable, variable, and unpredictable purposes.

Brumfit situates the consequences of a static view of language in real-life situations at several levels of interaction and analysis. He draws on historical and contemporary developments in education, linguistics, language teaching, sociology, and politics to illustrate the tensions among competing views of language and its uses. Beginning with the problem of integrating research and teaching in education and teacher training, he calls for greater understanding of and respect for the interaction of research and teaching and delineates the distinct but potentially complementary roles of teachers and researchers. He also describes ways in which teachers and researchers can learn from and support each other.

One important area that has been insufficiently explored by both teachers and researchers is the creation of meaning in the classroom. Brumfit argues that second language classrooms are acutely in need of research that fully explores how the context of classroom discourse affects the construction of meaning. Teachers need to be able to relate the situated discourse of specific classroom practices to the individual and group needs as well as the social practices that facilitate or constrain learning.

Brumfit examines ways in which the context of the classroom and learning are affected by the processes of generalization and simplification that are used by teachers, linguists, and language users alike. He shows how categories created by teachers are often misleading and proposes ways of categorizing activities in L2 classrooms that may be more suitable to the needs and activities of learners. Brumfit examines the artificial divisions of the categories of speaking, listening, reading, and writing as well as the ambiguous uses of the term `communicative competence`. He also shows how some categories created by applied linguists may be perceived as irrelevant by teachers, and he recommends ways to reconceptualize category systems, redefine problems in language use, and reconnect linguistic theory to problems in classrooms. He then examines some ways in which these reconceptualizations and redefinitions may affect the goals and activities of teachers and learners in university-level English for Academic Purposes courses.

On a broader scale, Brumfit examines the responses of both general educational theory and language teaching to the challenges that arise from developments in linguistic,
psycholinguistic, sociolinguistic, and sociological work over the past century. These challenges are based on an increasing recognition of the dynamic nature of language and social practices. This recognition leads to more fluid and interactive definitions of terms such as dialect, second language learning, literacy, native speaker, language rights, speech community, world languages, and cultural studies. Brumfit suggests that the tendency of linguists and educators has been to control and contain the effects of these new recognitions and definitions on their practices. He further argues that a more principled and inclusive response is necessary for the improvement of research and teaching.

A message of this book is that teachers, researchers, and policy makers realign their goals and methods in response to the plurality of languages, language uses, learners, and contexts of learning. Applied linguistics needs a plurality of approaches to the theoretical and empirical investigation of real-life problems in which language is a central issue. However, the goals and methods they use should incorporate a commitment to maintaining and supporting the dynamic, permeable, and variable nature of language and its uses by native speakers and learners. As a step toward conceptualizing this inclusive and dynamic goal, Brumfit offers a sample Language Charter for consideration by teachers, researchers, and policy makers. The charter is brief, open-ended, and adaptable to any language-learning or policy-making situation. He suggests implications for curriculum but states that the details of its implementation must be the concern of practitioners. An examination of his language charter and the lucid explanations of issues in research and teaching that this volume presents should be very informative for anyone concerned with education or language.

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This book, as part of a series published by Erlbaum entitled Second language acquisition research: Theoretical and methodological issues, addresses the question as to how the acquisition of a nonnative language progresses through interaction in language classrooms. As the author admits (p. xiii), this hardly a new topic in studies of SLA. The book, however, sheds some new light by introducing novel theoretical and methodological perspectives in dealing with this old topic. The author finds in Vygotskian ideas a theoretical stance to frame her views of language, the language learner, and the language learning process. Furthermore, it focuses on the second language (L2) acquisition of Japanese by English-speaking learners, which has only recently begun attracting the attention of SLA researchers.

After a brief introduction of key concepts, including functional systems, interactional routines, the zone of proximal development, assisted performance, internalization processes, and private and inner speech, the first chapter introduces an empirical work that is a year-long case study of seven adult learners of Japanese enrolled in first- and second-year Japanese courses at an American university. In her case study, utterances
of these Japanese language learners were video- and audio-recorded during their classes, transcribed, analyzed, and examined to illuminate the process of internalization or learning of the target language.

In the subsequent chapters the author discusses the data from a range of different perspectives. In chapter 2 she focuses on private speech observed in the data and discusses its role in L2 development. Chapter 3 shifts the focus from *intramental* to *intermental* form of learner speech—that is, from private speech to peer interaction. The notion of assisted performance is elaborated by drawing on classroom discourse data. Discussion of the role of interaction in L2 development continues in the next two chapters. Chapter 4 pays special attention to the question of corrective feedback, whereas chapter 5 examines specifically the development of the learners' interactional (or sociolinguistic) competence in Japanese.

The book, essentially a report of an empirical research study, begins by zooming in on individual learners, gradually moves the lens away from the individual mind to include peers, and ends in chapter 6 (the last chapter) with the presage factors of the teaching context. Chapter 6 discusses the design and implementation of tasks in relation to peer interaction and individual learners' L2 development.

The author’s two specific goals—to show how “active” learning takes place through interaction in foreign-language classrooms and to demonstrate it in a sociocultural theoretical framework—seem to have been accomplished effectively. There is a balanced interaction between theory and data, one of which informs the other. The theoretical explanation is easy to follow, and description of the data and its analysis is thorough. A review of the literature on different issues is up-to-date and useful. How much weight Ohta’s work in this book could have in on-going debates between the two camps of SLA researchers—“mainstream” cognitivists on one hand and socioculturalists on the other (Larsen-Freeman, 2000)—is yet to be seen.

**REFERENCE**


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Preservice kindergarten through university teachers will benefit from these books’ overview of the field and their carefully weighed claims about what counts as literacy prac-
tices in language arts and English classrooms. Though geared more toward a general audience of literacy teachers, the books do have sections and chapters that would appeal to preservice second language teachers. The straightforward writing in both books will be easily accessible to students for whom this may be the first encounter with literacy and classroom research. Taking different tacks on literacy research, the books complement each other well: Where Kucer’s survey stops, the Comber and Simpson collection picks up.

As one might imagine from a book by noted reading researcher Stephen Kucer, *Dimensions of literacy* overviews well the literacy-studies research that the author has contributed much to. The book explores how literacy events are shaped by cognitive, linguistic, sociocultural, and developmental influences: “If literacy education is to be effective, it is important that literacy be conceived as dynamic and multidimensional in nature” (p. 4). Few would debate this point, and many will appreciate Kucer’s fair reading of literacy research. The volume’s best moments include impartial and thorough treatments of language variation in chapter 3, the interesting and informative chapter 4, entitled “The Constructive Nature of Perception,” and, of course, the cognitive aspects of the reading and writing processes in chapters 5 and 6. Less developed, the sociocultural and developmental aspects of literacy have a disproportionately low number of pages dedicated to overviews of these areas. Rather than thorough summaries of the extant research—as one has come to expect from the first two sections on the linguistic and cognitive dimensions—these last two sections do little more than point to the usual suspects in the lineup of researchers in these areas. If I were to assign this book in my classes for preservice teachers (and I will), I would also assign Comber and Simpson’s book as a complementary extension of Kucer’s book.

*Negotiating critical literacies in classrooms* is not only a careful check to discussions of critical literacy in general but also a detailed exploration of the competing contingencies that inhabit the sociocultural and developmental aspects of literacy learning in L1 and L2 classrooms. The book is organized into four sections that are delineated roughly by the age group of students (preschool, primary, secondary, and tertiary). Through its breadth of teacher-research in classrooms around the world (kindergarten through university), the book asks teachers to resist the assumption that there is one critical pedagogy that achieves one kind of empowerment for all kinds of students. A book with this scope might risk fragmentation among its chapters—not so with this one. The chapters are unified by their common themes: the identity politics that play out in emancipatory pedagogies, the mitigated effectiveness of critical pedagogy, the risk-taking involved in critical literacy practices, and the influence that (in)flexible social and institutional structures have on critical literacy classrooms.

Although few of the chapters deal with critical writing practices, a number of the book’s 17 chapters discuss critical literacy in relation to second language reading acquisition. They include, but are not limited to, the following: Wallace’s chapter describes an L2 classroom in Britain geared toward teenaged first-year university students from various countries; Stein’s chapter describes a project in multilingual storytelling practices with a class of 12- to 16-year-olds in a black township school outside Johannesburg, South Africa; and chapter 5 (by Cheah) focuses on Singapore and chapter 6 (by Lin) on Hong Kong.

Each chapter takes issue with some aspect of the theoretical mantle of emancipatory pedagogy that is, it seems, easily and frequently discussed but not well qualified. Mellor and Patterson’s chapter offers one example of the kinds of qualification that critical ped-
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agogy needs, as they discuss critical reading practices in the classrooms for youths. They challenge the idea that a critical reading that produces multiple interpretations of a text is the sine qua non of critical literacy:

The production of multiple readings does not, however, free students from the normative requirements of producing a specific reading—in this case, an antiracist or anti-sexist one. Choosing freely and consciously involves choosing correctly (i.e., in the terms of the particular requirements) in order to be judged free and conscious. (p. 124)

How does one free a liberatory ideology from the shackles of becoming itself another normative practice in schools? This question is at the heart of these chapters that all examine various aspects of critical pedagogy without succumbing to a wholehearted, easy, or Pollyannic adoption of this popular theory. The chapters tease out the tensions and identify possible pitfalls in enacting Freire’s ideas, and they do so by situating the discussion in a variety of classrooms.

Although both books are worthy of recommendation, I was disappointed by the lack of discussion of the materiality of literacy and the impact of computing technologies on literacy practices. With the exception of a well-written and smart chapter by Bigelow that shreds the CD Oregon trail, none of these works considers the changing nature of (critical) literacy practices given the emergence of computing technologies. Additionally, these works do not examine the luxury of literacy that is evidenced by its material artifacts or lack thereof. Kucer misses a prime opportunity to look at the development of literacy practices in poor communities that have inconsistent and unequal access to pens, paper, books, and so forth. Sahni, author of chapter 2 in the Comber and Simpson collection, describes a classroom held under a tree in India with children writing on slates but never locates these material realities in larger, social and institutional structures within that region or country. These caveats aside, the books will be useful in various ways to preservice teachers, and the Comber and Simpson collection will be useful to graduate students and scholars interested in seeing the pedagogy in critical pedagogy.

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This volume presents a series of empirical studies that reflect the editors’ commitment to the exploration of pedagogic tasks from three interrelated perspectives—learning, teaching, and testing. The introductory chapter by the editors sets the tone of the volume by advocating this view of tasks and provides the basis for a definition that differs
from previous, generic definitions in its emphasis on “the different purposes to which tasks are used” (p. 5). Therefore, according to the editors, tasks are inherently distinct and highly dependent on the situational context in which they develop. The departure from former task definitions aims: (a) to avoid continuous misinterpretations between the pedagogy and the research fields, (b) to create a space for understanding the purpose that tasks serve in different areas, and (c) to elude “inappropriate standards for task evaluation” (p. 12). The rest of the chapters are grouped into three sections according to area of emphasis (learning, teaching, or testing). Each section begins with a brief introduction to the chapters it includes.

Part 1 consists of three empirical studies that explore how the manipulation of task variables may affect the learning process. In chapter 2, Bygate examines the role of task repetition and task types as variables that may have an effect on the development of oral skills. Levelt’s model of speech performance and the notion of limited attentional capacity are the theoretical basis for task repetition as a vehicle to free attentional resources, thus promoting learners’ fluency, accuracy, or complexity. In chapter 3, Ellis reviews a series of studies conducted by colleagues and himself. The purpose of this review is to identify the conditions (i.e., type of input) in the design of nonreciprocal tasks that promote vocabulary comprehension and ultimately acquisition. In the final chapter of this part, Foster compares the use of lexicalized language in the oral production of native and nonnative speakers of English in the context of tasks under two conditions: planning and no planning time.

Part 2 involves a shift toward classroom-based research. The thematic change comes along with a change in research methodologies that are descriptive and qualitative (except chap. 5). In chapter 5, Swain and Lapkin compare learners’ production in dictogloss and jigsaw tasks to discern which one better promotes a focus on form. In chapter 6, Samuda’s study examines how both task features and the teacher herself are essential guiding elements for learners to establish form-meaning connections during task completion. In chapter 7, Lynch and Maclean’s study explores whether task repetition promotes better language outcomes at different proficiency levels. In this particular study, repetition is inherently constructed within the cyclical structure of the task.

Part 3 contains three chapters that focus on task-based assessment of spoken language. In chapter 8, Skehan reports on a metastudy, the purpose of which was to examine whether task characteristics consistently affect performance. The next two chapters continue to build a strong case for the effect of tasks as testing instruments. In chapter 9, Wigglesworth goes a step further and examines how not only certain task characteristics but also task conditions affect learners’ performance. In the final chapter, Chalhoub-Deville argues that the features of task-based instruction are also part of the design of previously existing testing instruments. This relationship serves as the framework for an empirical study that examines the construct-related evidence of three oral assessment instruments. The volume closes with an afterword by the general editor, Candlin, who discusses tasks in the context of curriculum development.

One of the strengths of this volume is the appearance of less-discussed topics, such as the role of the teacher during task completion or the discussion of validity issues in task-based assessment. The book provides variety and yet cohesiveness among the studies. Topics such as task repetition emerge in different sections of the book, offering a comprehensive and global approach to a single issue. As topics vary, so do research methodologies—from case and group studies to the inclusion of a meta-analysis—and analytic procedures. However, transition for the reader is eased by a precise descrip-
tion of procedures and a detailed report of statistical analysis (i.e., the multidimensional scale analysis in chap. 10). An exception here is the metastudy, which unfortunately does not provide any descriptive information about how the figures reported in the tables for each study were calculated. Overall, this book successfully accomplishes the editors’ goals, offering an excellent insight into the many-sided perspectives of pedagogic tasks.

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This book presents a task-based instructional framework for communicative language teaching. The first seven chapters focus on task-based instruction, and the remaining two chapters deal with assessment. Each chapter begins with a brief review, goes on to the topic of discussion, and ends with a summary. Two sections follow each chapter. In “Gaining Greater Perspectives,” Lee recommends further readings for in-depth reflection of the topic of the chapter. The “Application Activities” section contains a number of exercises to put into practice the concepts discussed in the chapter.

In chapter 1, Lee defines the cornerstones of the task-based approach of this book. Communication is defined as “the expression, interpretation, and negotiation of meaning” (p. 11) and departs from more conventional practices in which communication has “a question and answer” approach. Lee’s view of negotiation takes an eclectic perspective, based on theoretical tenets as well as classroom-based research. The definition of negotiation embraces an interactionist perspective, but there is special emphasis on a social view of communication that “demands that negotiation of meaning not only be connected to breakdowns in communication . . . but that negotiation be the fabric of instructional practice” (p. 12). In chapter 2, Lee critically examines various learner-teacher classroom encounters, which are all broadly categorized under the umbrella of communicative practices. He effectively draws examples from the transcripts to illustrate common departures (i.e., teachers’ excessive control over the interaction) from a true communicative, enriching experience. Lee sets the foundation for another important notion in the book in chapter 3, that of task. A task is defined as:

(1) a classroom activity or exercise that has (a) an objective attainable only by the interaction among participants, (b) a mechanism for structuring and sequencing interaction, and (c) a focus on meaning exchange; (2) a language learning endeavor that requires learners to comprehend, manipulate, and/or produce the target language as they perform some set of workplans. (p. 32)

In what follows in this chapter, Lee transforms theoretical issues into tangible criteria that make possible the development of task-based activities out of traditional discussion
questions. The two activity types in question (task-based and discussion activities) are compared with a classroom study in chapter 4. The purpose of the study is twofold: (a) to find out how many learners participate in discussions as opposed to tasks, and (b) to find out how much information learners recalled. Findings in both cases show the benefits of task-based activities over discussions.

In chapter 5, Lee describes ways in which interaction in the classroom can be implemented. First, with a detailed, analytical description of the instructor’s role in a particular activity, he illustrates how essential the instructor is as the manager of the task. Second, he introduces various suggestions for the implementation of activities with a three-part sequential structure for task-based activities: “framing or introducing an activity, executing the steps of an activity with an eye toward the time constraints under which instructors operate, and concluding an activity” (p. 71).

A controversial topic in task-based instruction is undoubtedly the question of task sequencing and is discussed in chapter 6. Influenced by work in curriculum development, Lee proposes three criteria to increase the complexity of an activity into higher proficiency levels and illustrates the use of these criteria (i.e., increase of the information load) with modified versions of earlier activities.

Chapter 7 broadens the picture to building of language competence through task-based activities. Lee once again returns to previous activities to describe how task-based activities provide opportunities for developing not only grammatical competence but also illocutionary and textual competence. In the last two chapters, chapters 8 and 9, Lee focuses on task-based classroom and oral testing, introducing various test formats, addressing the difficulties the test-taker and test-giver may encounter, and, finally, suggesting ways to overcome these difficulties. Ultimately, these two chapters illustrate the need for the inherent link between instructional practices and assessment, in particular the need to show “how testing can support classroom practice and interacts with it, but not drive it” (p. 113).

This volume is a practical book, yet firmly rooted in theory and research. Lee makes pedagogical concepts easily accessible to the reader by means of the development of step-by-step sample activities, the analysis of classroom transcripts, down-to-earth explanations of common classroom problems, and clear suggestions for improvement. This is unquestionably recommended reading for teachers, teacher educators, material developers, program directors, and anyone with an interest in task-based instruction.

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This discussion of second language (L2) phonological development is rooted in what the author refers to as the three features of interlanguage (IL): native language (L1) con-
distribution (as positive or negative transfer to the L2), L2 input, and universal language principles not subsumed by either language.

Chapter 1 presents some background issues in L2 phonological research, such as age effects and the segmental, syllabic, and prosodic elements that contribute to the perception of global foreign accent. There is also a brief overview of theoretical approaches to phonology ranging from structuralism through optimality. Chapter 2 is devoted to research issues including transfer, L1-L2 similarity, universals, perception, and L1 loss. Chapter 3 includes a discussion of different types of variation, focusing primarily on the relationship between L1 transfer and stylistic variation. The final two chapters are devoted to the Ontogeny Phylogeny Model (OPM), defined as encompassing the development of an individual’s IL from IL = L1 to IL = L2 and the language development of a population including contact phenomena and so forth. The OPM assumes the following: (a) The basic IL chronological development pattern is that L2 increases, L1 decreases, and dormant universals (not in the L1 or L2) become activated in L2 acquisition, then increase, and finally decrease; (b) learners have access to universals (including Universal Grammar), leaving aside the issue of whether it is full or partial; (c) transfer dominates in the early acquisition stages; (d) the influence of universals then emerges as the learner eliminates L1 transfer but still lacks L2 proficiency, producing errors not part of either language; (e) once correctly instantiated in the IL, universal principles appear as part of the L2; (f) the relative rate of change of each of the three IL elements plays a role in stylistic variation, similarity, and markedness phenomena; and (g) the specific proportions for each of the IL elements vary by learner and phenomenon.

In the OPM, universal principles become the default source of production phenomena that cannot be attributed to the L1 or L2, but their effect is mediated, for example, by L1-L2 similarity. Similarity figures prominently in the book. In fact, theories of category learning generally depend on some similarity between stimulus and stored representation (e.g., Estes, 1986). The general patterns of the OPM can also be overridden by such factors as familiarity with a given style and focused attention. It would seem, therefore, that cognitive factors as well as input (quality and quantity), interactional opportunities, and affective variables play a critical role in determining an individual’s IL development, although their influence is not captured in this model.

Recent research does not fully support the characterization of perceptual training as resulting in "only small improvements" (p. 56). Several studies using focused training at the segmental level have revealed significant and retained perceptual improvement as well as production improvement (e.g., Bradlow, Akahane-Yamada, Pisoni, & Tohkura, 1999) and earlier recognition of words in connected speech (Hardison, 1998), setting forth the criteria for successful training. On a minor level, a note to the reader on phonetic symbol use would have been helpful (/u¨/ is used instead of IPA /y/). Additionally, the statement that Canadian French does not have /u¨/ is inaccurate (p. 60).

The book’s survey of numerous studies in the field will be of interest to researchers and teachers. However, the model (and figures) represents the idealized L2 learner; as such, the OPM normalizes the variability that characterizes the population and the acquisition process. As a result, the OPM provides a macrolevel framework of L2 phonological development.

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