

teachers tried to redirect the outcome, other factors such as testing methods affected the participants. The community of teachers were unsure of how, when and by whom the communicative activities should be conducted.

This scenario seems somewhat familiar in the Indian context and experience of CLT, though the specificities are different. Another study relevant to the Indian situation of SLTE has been taken up in Chapter 3 by Davi Reis, entitled 'Empowering non-native English speakers to challenge the native speaker myth'. This study traces the attempt of NNESTs (Non-Native English Speaking Teachers) in exploring, through narratives of identity construction, how their identities are connected to their position as teaching professionals and by extension, their instructional practices. This is an issue which involves not only the complex sociology and politics of education in India, but also the kind of psychologies that emerge in the English teachers within a framework of very un-English social expectations, role and class differentiations. Gender also enters into this framework, as the majority of English teachers in India are women, and the profession of an English teacher changes their own perceptions of their identity as well as the social perceptions, with consequences, one might suggest.

This useful and thought-provoking collection of fifteen empirical studies has been organized around five central areas of concern for SLTE programmes. Part I has studies on 'Promoting Cultural Diversity and Legitimizing Teacher Identities'. Part II is 'Concept Development in L2 Teacher Education' and Part III is 'Strategic Mediation in L2 Teacher Education'. Part IV is 'Teacher Learning in Inquiry based Professional Development' and Part V is on 'Navigating Educational Policies and Curricular Mandates'. SLTE also could benefit from empirical work as much as from theory, because SLTE programmes have to ultimately be located

in specific contexts and handled by particular individuals; the outcomes in terms of teacher education would be significant if such studies become a part of the programmes.

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Cognition and Second Language Instruction

Peter Robinson, (Ed.) (2001).

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Reviewed by: *Iqbal Judge*



This book presents a detailed analysis of some of the key issues of cognition and learning in Second Language Acquisition (SLA), that reflect current developments and research findings on the role of cognitive variables such as attention, memory, automaticity, connectionism and learnability. Densely packed with theories about SLA, and backed by reviews of empirical researches in the field, it is a valuable compendium for the serious researcher. The collection of twelve articles is divided into two sections: the first section summarizes contemporary theoretical thinking about the above-mentioned cognitive correlates and the second section relates them to SL instruction, specifically task-based learning, vocabulary-building and instructional design.

In the first chapter, Richard Schmidt explores the theme of 'Attention', and asserts that

attention impinges upon virtually every aspect of SLA. His hypothesis being opposite to that of Bruner's 'magical realist' view that unconscious processes are largely at work in SLA, Schmidt focuses on conscious mental processes, presenting a review of the researches conducted on the role of attention in key areas of Second Language Learning (SLL). He also provides empirical evidence to corroborate basic assumptions about attention, such as it being limited, selective and essential for learning, subject to voluntary control, and controlling access to consciousness. Schmidt's thesis is that for learning to occur, attention must be specifically focused on whatever the particular learning goal may be, for example, a native-speaker like pronunciation would require focused attention even to sub-phonemic details of the input, within the existing schemata.

Nick Ellis delves into 'Memory for Language', presenting a Working Memory model in line with constructivist approaches to language acquisition, which view language learning as emerging from inductive reasoning. The concepts of chunking, creativity and aspects of vocabulary acquisition are explored in detail, drawing on researches by scholars from the 1960s to the 1990s. Making a case for connectionism, Ellis underscores the need to analyse the intricate network of associations that language learners activate and build upon in processing input data.

The structuring of linguistic input, the cognitive abilities of the learner, and the classroom context are analysed at length by Brian MacWhinney within the perspective of the 'Competition Model' which claims that language comprehension is based on detection of cues, with the most 'reliable' and 'available' cues being acquired first during language learning. Presenting developmental data from three languages, MacWhinney shows that word order is the predominant cue for children learning

English and case-marking for learners of Hungarian, though he admits to 'a major violation' of the predictions of the Competition Model which would have given precedence to agreement over word order, in the case of Italian. The Neuronal Learner Model stresses upon transfer, parasitism and automaticity in SLL. The conclusions drawn seem to validate the use of audio-video tapes and computerized lessons of a language lab as extra input for children; and listening to TV, radio, movies, rehearsing taped dialogues and practicing new lexical items for adults. This allows them to remain 'in contact with the input in ways that promote the functioning of neuronal loops for rehearsal, memory and learning.'

Michael Harrington trains his microscope over the challenging domain of sentence processing which is only amenable to indirect examination, and on a millisecond timescale. He takes up for consideration three approaches to sentence processing—principle-based, constraint-based and referential models, and studies the manner in which each approach resolves the ambiguities in typical 'garden path' constructions.

Robert M. DeKeyser calls attention to the development of automaticity in SLL and draws 'tentative conclusions' about the kind of classroom activities and curricular sequences that might aid automatization of language skills. Through the maze of studies conducted and theoretical positions formulated, what emerges is that the development of fluency and accuracy occur hand in hand; therefore, communicative drills to practice language structures can be supplemented by role plays, information-gap activities, etc., as the students make progress. Curriculum is represented as a cube, with each side representing requirements on form, meaning and social pressure respectively, and efficient skill development is seen as occurring by moving from one corner across the centre to the diagonally opposite corner of the cube, rather than across its ribs.

The second section of this book connects cognition to instructional design. The prioritization of meaning over message is considered by many linguists to be a natural phenomenon; contemporary communicative language teaching approaches follow the same trend, although increasingly, the need has been felt to teach form and structures, employing varied strategies to design tasks that integrate form with communicative intent. In the chapter, 'Cognition and Tasks', Peter Skehan and Pauline Foster point out that the issue of cognitive difficulty of tasks has often been sidelined, whereas cognitive difficulty actually has important implications for the role of attention in task completion. They suggest that if the cognitive demands of the task are known, the task design could be used to 'manipulate' the learner's attention between form and meaning to enable interlanguage (IL) development. Admitting that assessing a task's difficulty is fraught with problems, the researchers nonetheless suggest three principal areas – language, cognition and performance conditions – to analyse task complexity. The findings from different researchers are also indicated in this section, such as a narrative containing a well-structured and obvious storyline resulted in a more fluent language output than a narrative with a less structured storyline. Additionally, the roles of pre- and post-task activities have been empirically explored. Catherine Doughty's chapter, 'Cognitive Underpinnings of Focus on Form', which is the longest in the book, first examines some definitions of focus on form, identifying cognitive resources and micro- and macro-processes. It moves on to a discussion of two models for memory and speech production in language processing. Three fundamental pedagogical concerns are then addressed at length: 1) Whether learners have the cognitive resources to notice the gap between their IL utterances and target language (TL) utterances; 2) Can

there be a pedagogical intervention that does not interrupt the learner's own language processing, and 3) When should such an intervention occur? Should the teacher recast reformulate learner's errors and to what extent? The findings are backed by reports of experiments conducted by different researchers in immersion settings.

Vocabulary learning is taken up by Jan H. Hulstijn. After reviewing the psychological insights into incidental and intentional vocabulary learning, the roles of elaboration, automatization and rehearsal have been taken up for analysis, and the findings have been presented on a variety of pedagogic exercises that have been subjected to empirical research by scholars in the field. The contentious issue of rote learning is validated by suggesting contextualized, communicative follow-up activities such as role play.

The last three chapters move on to present a holistic, macro view of syllabus design. Editor Peter Robinson focuses on sequencing of tasks in order of complexity, providing both a theoretical rationale and empirical data. He also describes four key areas in which further research is imperative. Mark Sawyer and Leila Ranta study aptitude and individual differences as learner variables to be considered in instructional design, listing the problems and possible solutions in these areas. Finally, Renee Jourdenais examines protocol analysis as a viable method to contribute towards research in SLA.

A plus point of this book is that virtually every article not only provides succinct analyses of already done research, but also presents areas/issues that could be explored further, thus offering a wide range of issues a scholar can choose from. The extensive bibliography is a valuable add-on to set the researcher on the right path. However, it may be a little daunting for the teacher who is merely looking for a simple

guide to SLA and effective classroom instruction.

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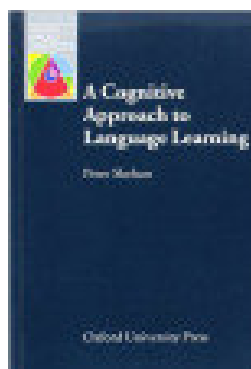
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A Cognitive Approach to Language Learning

Skehan, P. (1998).

Oxford University Press. (324 Pages).

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Reviewed by: ***Achla M. Raina***

The book presents an integrated account of issues in second language learning and language pedagogy, bringing into sharp focus the language learner and the learning process. Of the many contributions that the book makes, the single most important is its conceptualization of language learning as a dual mode information processing that involves rules as well as exemplars. It is this theoretical perspective which underlies the forays that the author makes into the issues of cognitive basis of language learning, pedagogical intervention through instruction and assessment, and individual variation in language learning. The book articulates a nuanced approach to language acquisition and learning derived from a view of language as a complex interplay of rules and lists. The approach is, in turn, translated into a set of clearly defined pedagogical practices.

The book consists of twelve chapters and a general introduction. The twelve chapters can be grouped into three broad sections: (i) the theoretical approach presented in chapters 1-4, (ii) approaches to language instruction and assessment discussed in chapters 5-7, and (iii) relevance of individual variation in language pedagogy dealt with in chapters 8-11. Chapter 12 contains the concluding remarks.

Chapter 1 begins with counterpoising the comprehension based approaches to second language instruction and the interaction/production based approaches. The claim that is sought to be built is that meaning-oriented instructional activities that bypass the form of language may induce the language learner to rely on strategies of communication. Chapter 2 questions the assumptions regarding the rule-based systems underlying communication and presents an alternative perspective which argues for a more substantive place for lexis in language than is usually accepted. Chapter 3 examines the processing models in language use and language learning. Three stages of information processing - input, central processing and output - are reviewed. For input, the concept of noticing is assumed to be central. The key factor in central processing is the existence of two representational systems - rule based and exemplar based. These representational systems are implicated in the output and the assumption that is made here is that it is the memory based system which is chosen over the rule based system where communicative pressure is paramount. Chapter 4 schematizes the models of second language learning based on questions that concern the nature of the underlying competence in each model, how the change occurs in the underlying system, how the system is used to enable real time performance, and how performance and developmental change relate to each other. A task-based approach to learning premised on a dual mode system that