

TEXTBOOK REVIEW

Second language acquisition. By ROUMYANA SLABAKOVA. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016. Pp. xxi, 483. ISBN 9780199687275. \$40.

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INTRODUCTION. This book is a textbook of second language acquisition (SLA) written within the theoretical framework of the generative approach to SLA research. The intended readers are advanced undergraduate students and graduate students who have some background in linguistics, in particular in syntax and semantics. The text is intended first and foremost for students with a prior background in generative linguistics. While the main linguistic concepts are explained when they are introduced, such explanations are necessarily brief, and students with no prior background in linguistics would find the more technical parts of the text somewhat difficult to follow. However, students or other readers who have a general interest in language and/or language acquisition, but lack a background in generative linguistics, should still be able to follow the main concepts presented in the book. This textbook is quite unique in that, while its focus is on theoretical research on SLA, it explicitly makes the link to potential pedagogical relevance of the research findings.

BRIEF SUMMARY. The book consists of thirteen chapters, divided into three parts. Each chapter ends with a section of exercises; at the end of the book are a glossary, references, and an index.

Part I, 'Language', provides a brief overview of the relevant background information that readers need to have in order to fully appreciate the rest of the book. Ch. 1, 'Language architecture', lays out the central argument of generative linguistics for the innateness of language and introduces the reader to several famous proposals on the structure of the language faculty. Ch. 1 then addresses the task faced by a second language learner and lays out the logic of the methodology used in generative SLA research.

Ch. 2, 'Language variation', walks the reader through the history of the generative study of language variation, from PRINCIPLES AND PARAMETERS through the MINIMALIST PROGRAM. Like Ch. 1, Ch. 2 ends by considering the implications of the theoretical linguistic research for the learning task of a second language learner. The goal of Ch. 3, 'The psychological reality of language in use', is to prepare the reader for later chapters that address second language processing by reviewing the central models and findings of the literature on language processing and psycholinguistics more generally.

Part II, 'Language acquisition', has the goal of placing the study of SLA into the study of language acquisition as a whole by considering a number of different language-acquisition scenarios. The focus of this part is on the respective contributions of age of acquisition and of input quantity and quality to the task of language acquisition.

Ch. 4, 'The critical period hypothesis', goes over the history of critical period studies and addresses the debate about the existence of critical or sensitive periods in SLA. This chapter also considers the role of input, bringing together a number of quite distinct phenomena, including variable input, comparisons between heritage speakers and second language learners, and variability among native speakers at different educational levels.

Ch. 5, 'First language acquisition, two first languages', provides an overview of the process of first language acquisition; most of the chapter is devoted to monolingual first language acquisition, but the last section discusses simultaneous bilinguals, who form a natural link between monolinguals and adult second language learners. In Ch. 6, 'Child second language, multilingual and heritage language acquisition, language attrition', a variety of other types of language acquisition scenarios are discussed. Throughout this chapter, and especially in the last section, the focus is, once again, on the relative contributions of age of acquisition and input quantity and quality to the outcome of the language acquisition process. The position taken in this chapter, and

throughout the rest of the book, is that the effects of age can potentially be overridden by rich input, and that UNIVERSAL GRAMMAR remains active in SLA by adults.

Part III, 'Second language acquisition', is the heart of the book. In addition to providing an overview of SLA research in the core areas of linguistics (with the one exception of phonology), the chapters in this part also make a link between theoretical research and language teaching. The argument, laid out in the introduction to Part III, is that research on SLA can provide language teachers and language learners with information about what aspects of the grammar are especially challenging or problematic for learners, and that teachers and learners can subsequently use this information to structure their language teaching and learning.

Ch. 7, 'Acquisition of (functional) morphology', traces the history of the field, from the morpheme-order studies of the 1970s through today's debates about the roots of difficulty with inflectional morphology as being at the level of representation, processing/retrieval, and/or prosody. Ch. 8, 'Acquisition of syntax', similarly takes the reader from the historical focus on global parameters in SLA to more recent debates about impaired vs. unimpaired representations and the role of syntactic features. A number of diverse syntactic phenomena are covered in this chapter, including word order within the VP, verb movement, and WH-movement.

Ch. 9, 'Acquisition of the mental lexicon', shifts the focus to language activation and models of lexical representation. This chapter also links to the preceding chapters on morphology and syntax by considering morphological decomposition in the lexicon, as well as the SLA of argument structure, an area that brings together lexical semantics and syntax. In Ch. 10, 'Acquisition of the syntax-semantics interface', the focus is on the mapping between form and meaning, and on learners' ability to draw new dividing lines when the form/meaning mappings in their native language and their second language do not match. This chapter lays out the logic of the POVERTY-OF-THE-STIMULUS argument for SLA, which has been addressed in much recent literature on SLA of the syntax-semantics interface. The semantic phenomena covered in this chapter include quantifiers, grammatical aspect, articles, and genericity—all of which are central to the study of the syntax-semantics interface in SLA.

Ch. 11, 'Acquisition of the syntax-discourse and semantics-pragmatics interfaces', brings discourse and pragmatics into the picture and addresses recent theories about the relationship between core grammar and discourse. The diverse phenomena covered here include information structure, focus and intonation, scalar implicatures, and pronoun reference. What unites all of these topics is that all of them require learners to integrate grammatical knowledge with discourse or pragmatic constraints.

While Chs. 7 through 11 address the SLA of different areas of linguistics, Ch. 12, 'L2 processing', shifts the focus to the psycholinguistic study of real-time language processing in bilinguals and second language learners. This chapter provides an overview of experimental techniques used in processing studies with learners and discusses the major studies that have used these methodologies. Relating back to topics introduced earlier in the book, Ch. 12 examines whether second language processing is affected by age of acquisition. The last section of this chapter addresses the role of individual differences in language processing.

The final chapter (Ch. 13), 'The bottleneck hypothesis and its implications for the second language classroom', revisits the hypothesis first proposed in Slabakova 2008, according to which the functional lexicon (inflectional morphology) is the locus of linguistic variation and hence the 'bottleneck' of the acquisition process. Ch. 13 addresses this hypothesis in light of the studies reviewed in the preceding chapters and concludes that while syntax and semantics are universal, learners cannot acquire them without bypassing the morphological 'bottleneck'. The chapter then goes on to make an explicit link to second language learning and teaching. After reviewing the most well-established approaches to language teaching, Ch. 13 urges language teachers to focus on functional morphology and lays out suggestions for what to do and what not to do in the classroom with regard to inflectional morphology.

While this book is not intended as a manual for language teachers, Part III, especially Ch. 13, makes a link between generative SLA and pedagogy that is not made often enough and presents teachers with concrete ideas for how theoretical findings might be incorporated into the classroom.

INSTRUCTOR'S PERSPECTIVE. The author of this review recently used this textbook in two semester-long (fifteen-week) courses, both of which were aimed at advanced undergraduate students as well as beginning graduate students in linguistics.

The first course was on language acquisition by children and adults, and a little over a third of the course was devoted to SLA (the rest of the course covered monolingual first language acquisition, bilingual first language acquisition, and developmental language disorders). Selected chapters from Slabakova's textbook were used as the primary readings for the SLA part of the course. Specifically, Chs. 7 and 8 were used for the unit on SLA of morphosyntax, Ch. 10 for SLA of the syntax/semantics interface, and Ch. 4 for age effects in SLA. Additionally, selected sections of Ch. 6 were used during the units on incomplete language acquisition, language attrition, and child SLA.

The second course was an introductory course in psycholinguistics, which covered a wide array of topics, including language perception, processing, and production, as well as both first and second language acquisition. Ch. 6 from S's textbook was used as the introductory reading for different types of language acquisition scenarios, while Ch. 12 was used as the primary reading on second language processing.

The design of this textbook allows for each chapter to stand on its own as an independent reading, which was particularly helpful given the survey nature of the courses in which I used this book. This textbook, in whole or in part, is appropriate for use in courses on SLA specifically, as well as on language acquisition or psycholinguistics in general.

The exercises at the end of each chapter are one of the strongest features of the book. The exercises fall into several distinct types: (i) exercises that ask students to conduct linguistic analysis on some of the particular linguistic phenomena discussed in the chapter; (ii) exercises that ask students to make predictions for the acquisition of particular linguistic phenomena and/or predictions based on particular theoretical models; (iii) exercises that ask students questions about SLA studies that are discussed in the text, in some cases asking students to read the original paper; (iv) exercises that ask students to critically evaluate the claims of specific theories or models; and (v) exercises that ask students to work with real acquisition data or to create a mini-experiment. Some of the exercises are well suited for in-class small-group activities or large-group discussion, while others (especially the longer ones, or ones that require detailed data analysis) would work well as homework assignments. Importantly, none of the exercises simply ask students to restate the facts or opinions given in the chapter. Instead, the exercises encourage critical thinking about both theory and methodology and give the students a taste of what it means to be a researcher in SLA.

S's book stands out among other SLA textbooks. It differs from SLA textbooks such as Ellis 1994, Gass & Selinker 2001, Ortega 2009, Cook & Singleton 2014, and Saville-Troike 2016 in that, unlike those texts, it adopts the generative approach to SLA and addresses research findings within this approach. At the same time, S's text also differs from existing volumes on generative SLA, such as Hawkins 2001 and White 2003, which focus on syntax to the exclusion of other domains. S's text, in contrast, brings in SLA data from many different linguistic domains.

In spirit, S's text comes closest to the edited volume Whong, Gil, & Marsden 2013, which also aims to bring together generative SLA research and second language pedagogy. However, Whong et al. is a collection of papers on distinct topics and is not intended as a textbook.

The textbook that most closely resembles S's is Snape & Kupisch 2017, which similarly covers research in generative SLA. However, S's text is much more comprehensive than that of Snape and Kupisch, covering considerably more ground with regard to the number and variety of topics covered (the one exception is second language phonology, to which Snape and Kupisch, unlike S, devote a full chapter), as well as the variety of language acquisition scenarios that are considered.

SUMMARY. S's text is the most comprehensive textbook available today that provides a detailed overview of SLA research in syntax, morphology, semantics, and the interfaces from the generative perspective. It is unique among SLA textbooks in making a strong link between generative SLA and language pedagogy. The interesting, carefully designed exercises in each chapter also

contribute to making this an excellent textbook for use in upper-undergraduate and graduate classes in SLA, and in language acquisition more generally.

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