

Issues in Second Language Acquisition: Multiple Perspectives, ed. by Leslie M. Beebe, New York: Newbury House, 1988, xiv, paper, 190 pages, \$22.50 CDN, ISBN 0-06-632049-6.

Along with an introduction by the editor, this volume offers a collection of five state of the art papers (each representing a different approach to second language acquisition (SLA)) and a sixth one which attempts to tie together some of the main points made in the preceding papers. In this sense this book is an especially welcome and refreshing departure from numerous works on the topic which tend to view SLA primarily from a psycholinguistic perspective and which are made up of yet another series of papers presenting the results of recent research on SLA.

The first paper, 'Psycholinguistic issues in SLA' by A. Seliger, does much more than cover the 'latest developments in the field' since it also offers a thematic account of the main different perspectives from which psychologists have viewed SLA since the late 50s. Among the issues examined by Seliger are: How does the learner develop his/her language and what are the processes involved? What is the role of first language knowledge in second language development? What psychological characteristics of the learner lead to successful SLA? As such, Seliger's paper is a nice introduction for newcomers to the field of psychologically-oriented research to SLA.

The second paper, 'Five sociolinguistic approaches to SLA,' is by L. Beebe. The five perspectives examined by the author are: the Labovian variability paradigm; Bickerton's dynamic paradigm; communicative competence; speech accommodation; attitudes and motivation. Beebe provides us with a synthetic account of how various researchers (Beebe, Dickerson, Tarone, etc.) have attempted to apply these frameworks to research on SLA and of the findings which have emerged from their work. I found this article particularly well written and informative. It is now required reading for students who take my Introduction to Sociolinguistics course at OISE.

The third paper, 'Neuropsychology and SLA' by F. Genesee, is a review of experimental research on bilingualism. The review is organized around three major themes: (i) L1 and L2 localization in the left and/or right hemispheres of the brain; (ii) the different ways in which languages with different writing systems (e.g., ideograms vs. graphemes) are represented and processed in the brain; and (iii) the critical period hypothesis for SLA. His review is most enlightening. It offers a systematic overview of the main

findings, hypotheses and principles which have been generated by the field over the last 15 years, along with a critical examination of the considerable methodological difficulties encountered by researchers in the area.

The fourth paper, 'Instructed interlanguage development,' is by M. Long. In it, the author attempts to assess, both on methodological and theoretical grounds, the evidence that instruction affects interlanguage development, in connection with: (i) acquisition processes (e.g., transfer, pidginization, etc.); (ii) acquisition sequences; (iii) rate of acquisition; and (iv) ultimate level of second language proficiency. His conclusion is that instruction has a positive effect on processes, rate and level of SLA but little or no effect on acquisitional stages. His review is a healthy antidote to the views of theorists and program designers who advocate the elimination of formal language teaching from the second language classroom.

The fifth paper, 'SLA within bilingual education programs' by J. Cummins, is a very valuable introduction to the bilingual education policy debate. It features a review of theory and research that allows one to understand why the largely positive results of Canadian research on bilingual education are apparently not confirmed by the findings of American research on the same topic. According to this author, much of the apparent contradiction can be erased if one takes into account the nature of the bilingual program (minority language maintenance, true immersion, transitional, etc.) and the social, cultural and linguistic attributes of the student population.

In the sixth paper, 'Multiple perspectives make singular teaching,' T. Scovel reviews the five state of the art papers with a view to bringing out the implications for second language pedagogy of the research discussed therein. His main message is: if each of the five different perspectives in this volume constitutes a crucial aspect of SLA, none can claim to give a satisfactory account of it on its own. Further along these lines, each of these different approaches can be broken into different paradigms which represent the developmental stages that such approaches have gone through. However, many of the proponents of the new paradigms have failed to recognize and to capitalize on the various contributions made by their predecessors, probably because they were more concerned about selling their perspective on theoretical or 'philosophical' grounds than about operationalizing it. Therefore he urges practitioners to refrain from adopting any of the competing paradigms wholesale and to use their own experience in assessing the strengths and weaknesses of different approaches to second language teaching.

All in all, I am of the opinion that Beebe's book constitutes a very useful introduction for newcomers to the field of SLA and that it is even sufficiently stimulating and informative for 'false beginners' like me (I once dabbled in SLA) who wish to refresh their grasp of the field.

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