Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development
Vol. 31, No. 3, May 2010, 323–329

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

BOOK REVIEWS

Second language acquisition: an introductory course (3rd edition), by Susan Gass and Larry Selinker, Oxford and New York, Routledge, 2008, xviii + 593 pp., £62.50/US$100.00 (hardback), ISBN 978-0-8058-5497-8; £30.99/US$49.95 (paperback), ISBN 978-0-8058-5498-5

This reworking of Gass and Selinker's classic overview of second language acquisition (SLA) research makes an excellent introduction to, or review of, the field (or at least a certain version of the field). To have made some amount of sense out of the very large number of research studies, frameworks, conceptualisations, models, methodologies and inheritances that delve into some investigable aspect of mainstream SLA in the short three or four decades of its discernible existence is a triumph of compendious ongoing synthesis. Whether it matches the apparently even more compendious bringing together of Ellis (2008) is something I won't deal with here. Instead, this review will focus on two things that, for all its exhaustiveness, the present volume does *not* contain: an awareness of the legitimate pedagogical interests of its principal readership and (related to the first) an up-to-date approach to lexis.

Readers are warned in the introduction that they have before them a book about scientific research and 'not about pedagogy unless the pedagogy affects the course of acquisition' (2). Most teachers in an MA or other course where they might use this book would probably take the point. However, it is insisted upon unnecessarily and it really only applies to the first (roughly) half of the book in which universal grammar (UG) looms large. Making our way through the early chapters, those of us who taught or took an SLA course in the 1980s will remember the amazement of in-service teachers that almost nothing in its content resembled even slightly the stuff of their daily experience. Teachers spent their days teaching vocabulary, but vocabulary was of little or no interest in SLA; teachers initiated production, at first through imitation, and then introduced variation through drills, but both imitation and drills were throwbacks to the disproven behaviourism; teachers were concerned about their learners' errors, but in SLA these were signs of interlanguage development; a teacher's every move took place against a backdrop of first-language (L1) transfer, but transfer had been shown by SLA researchers to be either non-existent or, at best, a messy and minor phenomenon. (Indeed, one of the strongest pleasures in re-reading this book was to relive in fast-forward the slow and grudging rehabilitation of transfer within mainstream SLA.)

As the book proceeds, however, there is more and more material that a language teacher can recognise as more or less familiar. As we move to more cognitive approaches, interactionism, input processing, competition theory, cognates, pushed input, automaticity, and attention and control, the research questions and procedures can be seen more and more as formalisations of experienced teachers' own perceptions and experiences; while not quite looking for recipes, researchers of this period were clearly trying to make sense of what was basically the same world inhabited by teachers. In other words, the stern warning not to expect teaching recipes comes straight out of the earlier era, and this should be acknowledged and the point re-stated. Indeed, such warnings or sentiments are absent from other recent treatments of SLA research (e.g. Ellis 2008; de Bot, Lowie, and Verspoor 2005).

ISSN 0143-4632 print/ISSN 1747-7557 online
DOI: 10.1080/01434630903497970
http://www.informaworld.com

And yet, one can never be certain of the extent to which pioneer-era thinking has actually been left behind even in the second half of the present volume. The idea of an ordered interlanguage system is hard to give up, and yet new and newly valued factors that may not fit the framework very well must somehow be accommodated. Vocabulary acquisition is a good example. A generation of teachers was dissuaded from teaching vocabulary by the ancient and second-hand Chomskyism that lexis is interesting only to primatologists. How is vocabulary handled by Gass and Selinker?

Throughout its history, the book has had a dedicated chapter called 'The Lexicon', and this chapter has grown from 19 pages (out of 360) in the first edition (1994), to 22 pages (of 488) in the second (2001) and on to 25 pages (of 492) in this third version. This is an increase of three pages every seven years – but remaining at a steady 5% of the space available, despite the strong growth in lexical research over this period and Chomsky's own revised view that linguistic parameters reside mainly in the lexicon and hence 'language learning is largely lexical learning' (172). Admittedly, it is not only in the lexicon chapter that vocabulary research is mentioned; once we get past the UG phase, work by Kellerman and others is presented when it fits the different themes being treated. Indeed, we often get lexis where we do not expect it. When promised a syntactic finding we sometimes get more of a lexical one, as when Swain's 'pushed output' concept is described as promoting a move from semantic processing to 'the complete grammatical processing needed for accurate production' – but then the illustration involves a 'learner's struggle with the appropriate word' (327). This is one of numerous examples of a sort of lexico-grammatical blending at the level of assumption, perhaps an implicit awareness that lexis and syntax advance together in acquisition, although this is never explicitly acknowledged.

In fact, the lexicon chapter is oddly disconnected from the rest of the book. Although this is mainly an impression, some concrete evidence for it can be found in some simple type content analysis of the kind that vocabulary researchers like. The references under 'lexicon' in the book's index pertain almost exclusively to topics inside the lexicon chapter itself, despite the numerous inter-chapter cross-referencing opportunities. Conversely, lexicon discussions outside the lexicon chapter fail to cite relevant lexical studies that *area* in the chapter. For one example among many, Chomsky-as-minimalist is attributed with the discovery that word knowledge is multi-dimensional, which is a foundational principle in Nation's (2001) pedagogical treatment of lexis – and, while Nation's point is cited in the lexicon chapter, it is not cited in connection with Chomsky's observation. Why is vocabulary confined to its box? That 'there has been less research on the lexicon in SLA than its importance might warrant' (475) was once explained on the basis that lexis is too simple, but now, the chapter on lexicon concludes, it is too complex. We leave the lexicon chapter with a promise of integration in the final one, only to find once again no mention whatever of the lexicon. Particularly instructive is the integrated acquisition model presented in this chapter, where lexis does not appear in any box or circle or at either end of any arrow, especially in comparison with Levelt's production model a few pages earlier that has lexicon at its centre, and basically connected to everything.

Is the lexicon really too complex for integration in SLA, or is it just too inconvenient? It would be a massive task indeed to integrate lexical acquisition into the heart of SLA. Major changes would have to be made in two directions. Looking back, one can only shudder to think of the number of studies, particularly in syntax and pragmatics, where classic findings have almost certainly been confounded with inadequate attention to the participants' lexis. Did learners really not know it was less than ideal to answer the professor's invitation with 'I would be willing to come' (291), or were they simply short of the vocabulary for 'Gee, great, I'd love to?' And looking forward, it now appears that many recent L1-acquisition researchers view the emergence of morphosyntax as intricately timed to successive vocabulary bursts in a dynamic cycle of mutual causation, as proposed by Bates and Goodman (1997). This idea is worked out

at book length by Tomasello (2003), where lexis is at the beginning of the book and of the story, not a reluctant add-on at the end. Tomasello takes the Bates and Goodman correlations all the way, proposing that 'learning words and learning grammatical constructions are both part of the same overall process' (93). How long until someone produces the SLA version of Tomasello? The book reviewed here was a big job to write; the book that replaces it will be bigger.

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Tom Cobb
Département de didactique des langues
Faculté de l'Education
Université du Québec à Montréal
Montreal, Canada
cobb.tom@uqam.ca
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The ethics of identity, by Kwame Anthony Appiah, Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press, 2005 and 2007, xx+358 pp., US$45.00 (hardback), ISBN 978-0-691-12036-2; US$22.95 (paperback), ISBN 978-0-691-13028-6

On his mother's side, K. Anthony Appiah is the grandson of Sir Stafford Cripps, post-war Chancellor of the Exchequer. His Asante father studied law in London, where Appiah was born, soon after which the family went back to a Ghana struggling for independence. Appiah had his primary education there, then returned to England for secondary schooling and university, taking a doctorate in philosophical semantics at Cambridge. His philosophical background and mindset remain evident in this book, although he left semantics behind in the late 1980s, coinciding with his move to black studies at Harvard, then Princeton. He published three novels, while shifting his scholarly gaze onto the ethical and moral aspects of how identities constrain individuals, yet seem to provide the necessary conditions for them to shape their own life trajectories.

Appiah knows whereof he writes. It is obvious to him, as to all of us who are racially mixed, that racial and ethnic identities are cultural constructs, not biological givens or historical inevitabilities. A lifetime of having others tell you that you are black or white or both or neither will make it hard for anyone then to persuade you that such categories are not wholly contingent. As an openly gay man, Appiah has experienced the contingencies of gender and sexual orientation identities, and even his multi-layered career as semanticist, moral philosopher and novelist contributes to his gut resistance to being boxed in and labelled.

His philosophical background is already evident in the book's introduction, when he writes that 'if there is something distinctive in my approach, it is that I start always from the