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REVIEWS

COMPUTER-ASSISTED LANGUAGE LEARNING: CONTEXT AND CONCEPTUALIZATION. *Michael Levy*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997. Pp. xv + 298. $26.00 paper.

In the book *Computer-assisted language learning: Context and conceptualization*, Levy sets out in the preface to (a) "circumscribe Computer-Assisted Language Learning [CALL] for the purpose of teaching it" (p. xi), (b) build on previous work rather than being led by technological innovation, and (c) "understand better the relationship between theory and application" (p. xi). Two hundred thirty-two pages later (plus 66 pages of appendices and references), it is clear that the book delivers its promise. The author bases the book on previous work and addresses a perpetual problem in CALL—reinventing the wheel. Moreover, Levy links the history of CALL with the present and combines a very thorough literature review with survey data about CALL materials development.

The major strength of this book is the author's multifaceted approach to understanding CALL. In chapters 2 and 3, Levy presents a historical perspective and an interdisciplinary perspective of CALL. He then explores the conceptualization of CALL based on a very thorough literature review (chapter 4) and an extensive CALL survey (chapter 5) that was completed by the major contributors of the field from around the world. A total of 104 questionnaires (20 of which were part of the pilot study) form the basis of this chapter. Part 1 of the survey aims to determine individual factors related to CALL materials development. Questions regarding practitioners' personal language teaching or learning experience, theoretical basis, CALL experience, and development methods and approaches attempt to establish the education background, language teaching philosophy, and CALL experience of the respondents. In part 2, external factors affecting the successful development of CALL material, such as general development factors, hardware and software considerations, the role of the teacher, management, and current practice, are measured. Chapter 6, "Emerging themes and patterns of development," is a synthesis of the previous chapters. In chapter 7, the author proposes the continued development of a tutor-tool framework based on Taylor's (1980) work. The computer tutor, unlike the computer tool, evaluates the learner. Furthermore, the tutor assumes the absence of a teacher and learning takes place in "self-access mode outside the conventional classroom" (p. 181). Computer tools, on the other hand, often require teacher involvement, they can be used in the classroom, self-access center, or computer laboratory, and their use is not predetermined. Chapter 8, "On the nature of CALL," concludes the book. Appendices include the CALL survey used, its design, charts, and CALL resources on the Internet. Certainly impressive is the completeness of the reference list, which spans 22 pages and 561 references.

In *Computer-assisted language learning: Context and conceptualization*, Levy identifies what he thinks needs to be done to advance the field. The pivotal points Levy is conveying are (a) "CALL does not represent one homogeneous type of activity, one that can be

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described simply in terms of a stable, invariant framework relating computer, learner, and task" (p. 39), (b) CALL needs to be viewed as a multidisciplinary field, (c) an agreed upon metalanguage for discussion, materials development, and evaluation is essential for CALL authors, (d) viewing the computer as a tutor and a tool accords well with "the need for process-oriented materials as well as content-oriented materials" (p. 230), and (e) there is a need for increased involvement of teachers in CALL, a point also supported by the survey, in which practitioners viewed teacher-related factors as the most important ones. Levy suggests that the development of a descriptive language for CALL materials is urgently needed and that a first step towards that goal has been taken by Chapelle (1994), who sees promise in a three-level description of CALL activities—namely, texts, genres, and context.

This book provides an excellent choice for an introductory course on CALL and will be of interest to anyone interested in discovering how the literature on CALL relates to actual perceptions of the people who shape the development of CALL. Furthermore, I agree with the necessity for a metalanguage and the usefulness of the tutor-tool framework for CALL.

The discussion of the potential of the worldwide web, with its prominence and ever-increasing impact on the evolution of CALL, could have been addressed in greater detail, especially in light of Levy's concluding remarks on the importance of teacher involvement. Although it is not possible for many teachers to get access to CALL programs that require specific hardware or software, the worldwide web is accessible to many teachers, giving them the opportunity to conceptualize at least one type of CALL.

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PHONETIC IMITATION, ACCENT, AND THE LEARNER. *Duncan Markham*. Lund, Sweden: Lund University Press, 1997. Pp. 270. Sk 254 paper.

This published version of Markham's dissertation surveys the literature on second language phonetics (but not phonology), proposes two models, and presents experiments involving imitation of languages and dialects.

Chapter 1 describes the volume's content. Chapter 2 reviews the literature on imitation and acquisition from the perspective that "acquisition is regarded in this thesis as being a strongly imitative phenomenon" (p. 39). He then proposes the first of his two models, the Imitative Acquisition and Function Model, which relies heavily on accommodation (after Giles & Smith, 1979), with discussion of imitation type (adaptation and impersonation) and psycholinguistic mechanism (acquisition and access). Because there

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are so many boxes and factors with little discussion, it is somewhat difficult to obtain a clear understanding of the model.

Chapter 3 is a thorough review of L1 acquisition literature, but with only a brief reference to its relevance to L2 acquisition and a brief discussion of articulatory setting.

Chapter 4, "Foreign Accent," is a potpourri of phonological and phonetic accent, error salience, social and interactive factors, and attrition. This 20-page chapter has 19 subsections, so it is difficult to identify a central theme.

Chapter 5, "Accent Theory and the Literature," deals with phonetics but not phonology. In fact, Markham's theoretical stance—that acquisition is largely an imitative behavior rather than a process involving different levels of abstraction with a large innate component (he does not mention Universal Grammar and the only reference to Chomsky is Chomsky & Halle, 1968)—is reflected in his heavy reliance on Flege's Speech Learning Model (1992, 1995) and Best's Perceptual Assimilation Model (1995), which he says effectively discard the notion of substitution in favor of phonetic approximation. In this chapter, he also introduces his second model, the Achievement Model of Phonetic Acquisition. Although the model is as interesting, plausible, and complicated as is his first model, nowhere does he suggest how it could be tested.

Finally, chapter 6 presents the investigation, which is a series of imitation tasks performed by 8 native speakers of Swedish who performed imitation reading tasks of several different languages and dialects of Swedish. The sheer amount of data collected (several hours for each subject) is impressive and should be useful for other researchers looking for universals in L2 acquisition.

Chapters 7 and 8 present the results, which show that a number of speakers were judged nativelike by native speaker listeners but also reveal that "dialectal influences are frequently heard as foreign and foreign influences heard as dialectal" (p. 253).

In light of these results, chapter 9, the conclusion, calls into question the critical period hypothesis and further suggests some revisions in theories.

Markham's extensive work contributes to the growing body of data suggesting that achievement of nativelike pronunciation of a second language is attainable by adult learners (e.g., see Bongaerts, Van Summeren, Planken, & Schils, 1997). The results are thus encouraging for budding L2 learners.

However, there are at least two major shortcomings. First, over half of the book is a literature review, with less than half devoted to Markham's original research. Furthermore, out of nearly 300 pages, only 15 are devoted to his two models. The second shortcoming is more serious: His models are not discussed in connection with his experiments. After the literature review and the introduction to his models, the reader anticipates that the experiments will be the testing grounds for the models. Yet neither in the presentation of experimental design nor in the discussion of his results does he discuss the relevance of the experiments to his models. Thus, his models seem to be ephemeral to the volume. Additionally, other than testing the ability of nonnative speakers to imitate native speakers, we do not really have a clear idea of which theories or models his experiments are actually testing. Only in the concluding chapter, which is a mere six pages, does he mention his models. Yet he only restates them, rather than discussing the relevance of his experiments to these models. Because Markham's models are interesting and worthy of investigation, it is hoped that his future work will include research designed specifically to test them.

There are also some minor organizational deficiencies: Some chapters have summaries and tables but others do not, and there is no index.

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In spite of these deficiencies, the work is a worthwhile volume for SLA phoneticians and phonologists. In addition to the weighty literature review, the extensive amount of data collected should be useful for other SLA researchers. Because little segmental or prosodic detail is included, it is hoped that Markham will make his tapes available to other linguists.

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FROM READER TO READING TEACHER: ISSUES AND STRATEGIES FOR SECOND LANGUAGE CLASSROOMS. *Jo Ann Aebersold and Mary Lee Field*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997. Pp. xii + 263. $18.95 paper.

From reader to reading teacher: Issues and strategies for second language classrooms is a book targeted at second language teachers in training. The first two chapters provide a brief overview of theory and research in second language reading. Chapter 3 treats course design; 4, prereading activities; 5, activities during reading; 6, postreading activities; 7, vocabulary; 8, the use of literature; 9, assessment; 10, lesson planning; and 11, teacher development. In other words, the book attempts a comprehensive treatment of important issues related to reading instruction in second language contexts.

"Attempts" is a deliberate choice of word, for any book that attempts such a feat will surely fall short of meeting its goal. There are shortcuts peppered throughout the book that are disturbing. One example is the subsection on "students' language proficiency" (p. 41). Indeed, a full line of research has underlined the significant contribution of a learner's first language literacy coupled with a knowledge of the second language (grammar) per se toward understanding (explaining) the second language reading process. Yet, the authors note, "When students can understand enough of the message of the text they are reading to make general sense of the message, they are reading **within their language proficiency range** . . . " (p. 41, bold in the original). The authors go on to explain that reading beyond the language proficiency range means becoming frustrated

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with vocabulary and with "grammar structures of several consecutive sentences [that] are long and complex." The discussion of this very important issue blurs the construct of language proficiency to include notions of background knowledge involving both content and process dimensions. As such, then, there is no way to separate issues of second language from issues of knowledge. Blurring this distinction, particularly for practitioners, potentially jeopardizes the appropriate selection of challenging texts and threatens misdiagnoses and faulty assessments of individual readers. When teachers in training are relying on researchers, it is incumbent that they be provided with clear explanations.

This is fairly hard criticism, yet it is meant in the most constructive of manners because Aebersold and Field have produced in most other senses a truly useful book. For example, the book is full of lesson plans, each carefully detailed, including a listing of the time spent on each reading activity by "real teachers" in "real classrooms." There are even side-by-side lesson plans that illustrate individual teachers meeting the same objectives. Adding to the sense of reliability and realism, there are excerpts of teachers' and students' reflections—teachers coping with lesson planning, students coping with understanding.

If I were teaching a methods course, I would use this book. It provides an important model for teacher thinking and professional development. Used by a knowledgeable instructor who can accurately and fully explain the research in second language reading and the construct of second language comprehension, in general, this book offers teacher candidates important, practical, and critical information about their teaching and about how to enhance their students' comprehension in a second language.

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SECOND-LANGUAGE SPEECH: STRUCTURE AND PROCESS. *Allan James and Jonathan Leather (Eds.)*. Berlin: Mouton, 1996. Pp. 348. DM 189 cloth.

Second language speech: Structure and process is a collection of current research on SLA phonology. The papers in this book vary widely in scope and theoretical stance, but a recurrent theme is that research in second language phonology can shed light on other areas of SLA research. Summarized here are those papers that represent mainstream SLA phonology research, as well as papers that have particular relevance to other areas of SLA research.

Flege's "English vowel production by Dutch talkers: More evidence for the 'similar' vs. 'new' distinction" and Bohn and Flege's paper, "Perception and production of a new vowel category by adult second language learners," present further evidence for Flege's Speech Learning Model. L2 learners do not create new phonemes for vowels in the second language that they see as similar; rather, there is a common pool of phonemes that both systems draw from. The irony is that this more economical mechanism also causes foreign accent.

Leather's "Interrelation of perceptual and productive learning in the initial acquisition of second-language tone" suggests that, if subjects are trained to produce a phonetic feature (tone), they can then discern it, and vice versa. Training to distinguish phonetic

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features leads to competence, which in turn produces accurate performance. A key to success in both perception and production training is establishing a prototype for the feature and then determining the acceptable range of deviance from this prototype.

Yamada, Tohkura, and Kobayashi, in "Effect of word familiarity on non-native phoneme perception: Identification of English /r/, /l/, and /w/ by native speakers of Japanese," show the role that lexical familiarity plays in Japanese learners' abilities to discern the English phonemes /r/, /l/, and /w/. Learners are able to identify the phoneme correctly in familiar words, but in unfamiliar or nonsense words, success in identifying the phoneme seems to correlate with proficiency. An interesting observation by the authors, " . . . too great a dependence on linguistic competence may interfere with the development of second-language listening skills" (p. 114), could conflict with the communicative approach to language teaching.

Cunningham-Anderson, in "Native speaker reactions to non-native speech," explores triggers of negative attitudes toward nonnative speakers' speech. Mispronunciation of certain features consistently triggers negative reactions in native speakers of Swedish. It may be worthwhile for the language teacher to single out these important features for correction, to help language learners avoid social stigma.

Major's "L2 acquisition, L1 loss, and the critical period hypothesis" analyzes the first and second language phonological systems of near native (nonnative) speakers of Brazilian Portuguese, finding that the two systems affect each other. Curiously absent from this study is evidence that a learner could master a second phonology while maintaining the first; it may be that this has never been verified and may be impossible.

"Minimal segments in second language phonology" by Weinberger applies phonological theory to SLA and uses SLA data to verify and extend phonological theory. Weinberger posits that the theory of Underspecification can do much to explain the problem of differential substitutions: the tendency of speakers of one language to substitute one segment for L2 segments, whereas speakers of other, similar but unrelated languages substitute another segment. Because transfer cannot account for this phenomenon, we must look to underlying representations. An underlying underspecified segment will be the default segment for a language, and it is this segment that will be substituted for an L2 segment that is not present in the L1.

James, in "A parameter-setting model for second-language phonological acquisition?," questions whether principles and parameters can also apply to phonology. James synthesizes work on phonological parameters and points out the difficulty in applying this approach to the acquisition of phonology. The acquisition of a phonological system requires processing strategies rather than parameter setting, for both an L1 and an L2.

Laufer, in "Toward a typology of bilingual phonological system," presents a typology of bilingual systems, building on the idea that bilinguals may have their two languages' phonological systems represented in one of four ways. A key observation is that there seems to be no such thing as "a balanced bilingual." Even those who seem to keep their two systems separate nevertheless reveal influence from one system onto another.

Phonology continues to be an underrepresented area of second language research. The empirical research in this book furthers our understanding of interlanguage phonology. In general, the papers in this book show us that the phonemes, rules, and processes of second language learners often differ from those of native speakers of the target language.

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THE ACQUISITION OF SPATIAL RELATIONS IN A SECOND LANGUAGE. *Angelika Becker and Mary Carroll*. Amsterdam: Benjamins, 1997. Pp. xii + 212. $45.00 cloth.

This volume, the third in the *Studies in Bilingualism* series from the European Science Foundation's research on adult immigrants' L2 acquisition, begins with the observation that we have widely accepted the idea that learners' varieties and the transitions from one variety to the next are systematic, yet we have little research that records this systematicity. This study does exactly that by following for 30 months 10 L2 learners' developing linguistic means for indicating spatial relations. Carroll reports on two Italian speakers acquiring English; Becker on four Italian speakers and a Turkish speaker acquiring German; and Giacobbe, Perdue, and Porquier on two Spanish speakers and a Moroccan Arabic speaker acquiring French. To elicit the core data, the researchers asked the learners to describe pictures and to provide stage directions for a scene they had viewed to someone who had not seen it.

The research approach is data driven without any apparent allegiance to or need to support a particular theoretical perspective on SLA. The only principles guiding the research are the beliefs that SLA is systematic and that the procedures used for learning how to express spatial relationships are determined by (a) the forms and conceptualizations of space in the L1 and (b) general principles of language processing that guide the recognition of forms and their meanings and constrain the course of SLA development. One research objective is to isolate these principles and show how they interact in the adult learner's SLA process.

Longitudinal case studies with numerous informants from various L1 backgrounds learning different L2s are costly and therefore infrequent. When they do occur, we need to learn all we can from them. The descriptions of these learners' developing systems and the samples of their L2 production demonstrate not only systematicity but also the complexity of the L2 learning task and the learners' creativity in managing it. For example, the learners quickly use *left* and *right* for the picture descriptions, but they do not use these lexical items for the stage directions because, whereas the viewer's perspective is established and maintained with the picture, the actor's orientation to the objects and the speaker is constantly changing. Learners' creativity is shown in how they compensate for inadequate L2 knowledge. For instance, because L2 learners are able to describe vertical relationships before front and back, they convert three dimensional space into two dimensions. Thus, a man in front of a railing is described as "under" it.

Unfortunately, the study's intriguing findings are not always presented in ways that make them readily accessible. I found myself flipping pages often, especially in the English acquisition chapter, because first the L2 system is described, then the L1, next learner 1's system in the first cycle of data collection, then learner 2's, then learner 1's in the second cycle, and so forth. To recall the systems, trace the learners' development, and follow the discussion completely and critically, I needed comparative tables. The German acquisition chapter does provide tables comparing the forms individual learners produced, but developmental trends are not obvious because the forms are not marked for the cycle in which they first occurred. The inclusion of word-for-word English glosses for the learners' French utterances also would have benefited readers who know little French, especially because some of the learners' French is presented in phonological transcription, which makes it especially difficult to understand if readers' familiarity with French is primarily with the written language.

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Furthermore, terminology and definitions are often unnecessarily complex and technical. For example, the lengthy definition of *topological subspaces* includes such language as "Every topological space is described in terms of (a) a set of points, (b) a class of subsets defined as open sets, and (c) the set operations of union and intersection" (p. 21). Only much later when I read "the processing of topological expressions requires less attention than the [*sic*] that of axis-based expressions as the latter presuppose the definition of orientation" (p. 146) did I firmly grasp what *topological* meant.

Finally, formatting and editing mistakes are distracting and sometimes misleading. A learner named Berta in the text is Bernarda on a table. Hard returns are found within paragraphs, double spaces are omitted between data description paragraphs and conclusions, some tables have no cell boundaries, the italicization of word lists continues onto words that are not part of the list, and so on.

Despite these shortcomings in its presentation, the novel, detailed, thorough, thought-provoking, and extensive content of this study makes reading it worth the effort.

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