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SECOND LANGUAGE WRITING SYSTEMS. *Vivian Cook and Benedetta Bassetti (Eds.)*. Clevedon, UK: Multilingual Matters, 2005. Pp. xi + 448. $69.95 cloth.

This wide-ranging collection explores the oft-neglected question of how writing systems impact the learning of second language (L2) reading and writing. The excitement with which I greeted this volume was sustained by the introductory chapter in which the two editors, both linguists at University of Essex, United Kingdom, present an overview of research in L2 writing systems.

All language teachers and researchers should read this introduction. It lays out, with clear tables and diagrams, categories of writing systems and types of studies that explore their cognitive effects. Two particularly helpful features are the list of methods and the thorough summary of chapters, organized into writing, reading, language awareness, and teaching. Basic concepts include graphotactics (the co-occurrence of symbols), directionality (e.g., Arabic reads right-to-left vs. English), transparency (degree of one-to-one correspondence between symbols and pronunciation on a continuum from orthographic depth to orthographic shallowness), grapheme-sound correspondence rules (for alphabets, syllabaries, and even Chinese, with phonetic radicals), phonemic awareness (ability to segment the stream of speech consistently into distinctive phonemes), and other cognitive processing differences fostered by various writing systems, from whole-word recognition, the *lexical route*, to symbol-sound decoding, termed the "*phonological" route*.

Although the "universal phonological principle" (Perfetti, Zhang, & Berent, 1992) posits that spoken language dominates in the reading of all writing systems, Cook and Bassetti point out that individual word recognition does not necessarily take a speech-based route (pp. 15–16). It is the variability in such word-level processes across writing systems that forms the focus of this volume.

Each chapter reports on individual research programs with extensive citations. After a contrastive analysis of the linguistic structure of various orthographies (and the languages on which they are based), the authors examine potential differences in cognitive processes when literate individuals move from awareness of language, as acquired in first language (L1) writing system literacy, into learning a new language and writing system.

Notable are innovative methods (e.g., Chikamatsu's tip-of-the-pen error analysis, Somers's corpus approach to handwriting analysis, and Bassetti's differing segmentation of Chinese character strings by Chinese and English L1 literates), detailed contrastive analyses of performance with subtly different alphabetic systems (van Berkel's Dutch-English, Hickey's Irish-English, and Schmid's Italian-Swiss German studies), and close examination of instructional contexts for Chinese and Japanese literates. Beyond simply contrasting formal writing systems, Okada discusses the impact of the *romaji* romanization of Japanese, Lau and Liow acknowledge confounding variables on learners exposed to the *pin-yin* romanization of Chinese, and Scholfield and Chwo distinguish instructional differences in Hong Kong versus Taiwan.

Proficiency differences examined by Akamatsu suggest that Japanese learners of English do not easily shake free from the effects of their L1 writing system. Alphabetic versus nonalphabetic literates (Sasaki; Randall) show significant differences, but the researchers acknowledge the complexity of the results and are careful not to oversimplify. The social and instructional context explored in depth by Hickey ends with an instructional treatment—the "taped book flood"—to assist reluctant readers of Irish.

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These examples demonstrate the high standard set by the editors in choosing work that does not gloss over details but, instead, honestly explores the complexity of literacy in language learning.

It is refreshing to see both psychologists and linguists united in one volume (despite a few significant gaps, such as aphasia victims who retain language learned through writing but lose access to the native tongue [Paradis, 1994] and Stroop experiments on automaticity). The emphasis is on positive transfer of awareness in L2 writing systems, as with Cook's discussion of multicompetence and Koda's dense chapter on the transfer facilitation model. With the exception of van Heuvel's work, based on connectionism with computer modeling, this volume downplays interference from less conscious, unavoidable automatized procedures. Other slight drawbacks include the lack of a comprehensive bibliography at the end of the volume and a rather idiosyncratic listing of scholars in the index—omissions that make it harder to access the research base. Nevertheless, the clarity of charts and tables throughout the volume make material understandable for those less familiar with L2 writing system research.

Readers might wish for a concluding chapter listing implications of this branch of cognitive science. The editors, however, close with Cook's sensible suggestions for teachers who work with learners of an unfamiliar writing system. Although larger conclusions would be premature, this volume models in impressive detail how language researchers and teachers can observe the interactions between writing systems and language learning.

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