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First Person Singular

Susan Gass

The path I took

I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference. Robert Frost (Mountain Interval Collection, 1916)

The beginnings of an interest in language

A professional journey is always part personal and mine is no exception. How does an individual from the Midwest of the United States get involved with language? It is something I have pondered for a long time along with the additional question of how that involvement translated into a profession. I hardly see it as a profession; rather, it was a life-long love of language that took me down a professional path.

In the seventh grade I began studying French at a girls' school in the suburbs of Detroit (yes, the same school [the boys' part] that Mitt Romney attended!). I don't remember much from that class other than my eyes being opened to cultural differences that I had never before imagined. My experience in learning a language was clearly grammar translation with drills galore and to this day, after six years of French in middle and high school and one year of French in university, I can barely get from point A to point B in Paris. Perhaps this was the beginning of my realization that an interactive component to language learning was crucial. What that class did was awaken in me an appreciation of language. I continued French through high school and even into college where I took many French literature courses although at the time I was more interested in the language side of things.

My life truly turned around after my junior year in high school when, through a serendipitous turn of events, my parents met two individuals (an American teacher at a private school in Detroit and her Italian husband, a university professor) who were taking four young women my age to Rome for the summer to live with his family and to study art, art history, and history. Language was not a major (or even minor) part of this program, but it reinforced my fascination with different cultures and everything that went along with cultural differences. I was introduced to a curriculum of art and history that never would have been available to me through a traditional high school program.

During my senior year of high school, the Italian family, perhaps recognizing my excitement at this new experience of living abroad, invited me to live with them for a year. My parents agreed and I put off entering university for that period. Language learning now became a necessity, and, of course, something more than drills was needed. I had to use Italian daily

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to communicate with those who were providing me with sustenance. By the end of the year, I was miraculously fluent in Italian, not through any classroom experiences but through my own efforts, which consisted of self-imposed linguistic analysis. There was hardly an utterance I heard or a song that I listened to that I did not spend time analyzing into its component parts. Grammar, thus, became my driving force. It is no surprise that I still believe in grammar instruction and focus on form, while at the same time promoting the value of interaction.

I returned to the U.S. to a small women's college in Massachusetts in 1962 with my desire to continue language study more firmly implanted than ever (although I did have a brief flirtation with the idea of majoring in physics). I was introduced to more French literature and had a steady diet of Molière, Flaubert, Stendhal, Zola, and many others. My days and nights consisted of spending time in the library reading these works and taking copious notes (no copy machines then!). I was still driven by my interest in language and by my desire to return to Italy. No Italian courses were available and no study abroad program was available to me, so in January, 1964 I boarded a plane heading to San Francisco where I was about to continue my undergraduate work at the University of California, Berkeley, a university with a strong Italian program.

At Berkeley, I discovered that there was a discipline called linguistics where my instructor taught me that a match would be extinguished when I said 'pill', but not when I said 'bill'. The course I took opened my eyes to this discipline, but a few years passed before I was able to realize that this was a way to do what I wanted to do: understand language and focus on Italian.

But before I could get to that point, I went through two more years of literature study (now at least Italian) as an undergraduate student and a year as an M.A. student at Middlebury College. In both cases (UC Berkeley and Middlebury), a year living in Italy was part of my study. During these years of literature, I read older works such as Dante, Petrarca, and Boccaccio, later authors such as Tasso, Ariosto, Goldoni, more modern writers such as Pirandello and Moravia, and contemporary authors such as Pavese, Calvino, Carlo Levi, and Primo Levi, all the time wanting to understand the language part of these works, and using these works to help learn Italian.

Following the granting of my Middlebury degree (an M.A. in Italian), I was still not sure of what I wanted to do and found myself once again living in Rome, working primarily as a translator and interpreter. I spent time interpreting for businessmen trading cloth and translating a book from English into Italian on Formula One racing. I soon realized that that was not for me; my interests in cloth and automobile racing were limited.

And so, I came upon teaching. At this point I was about 24, with no serious skills other than speaking Italian. I applied for a position at an American School in Rome teaching Italian. To this day, I am amazed that years later I found myself seriously interested in language learning and language teaching given the negative experience of this first teaching assignment. With no teaching experience whatsoever and with no experience dealing with small children, in my first assignment I had to teach Italian to a class of 30 first graders, with a wide range of language abilities. About one-third of the students had been born in Italy and Italian was probably their first or at least their best language, another third had spent a few years in Italy and were also comfortable in Italian, and the remaining children had just arrived in Italy with no knowledge of the language. With no curriculum and no guidance from school administrators, I floundered and to this day have blocked out most of the bad memories.

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Following a stint working for Pan Am, in 1971 I relocated to Madison, Wisconsin where I finally found the discipline that interested me (linguistics). Following a divorce, I transferred to the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) in 1973 where I enrolled in a Ph.D. program in the Department of Linguistics. My background for the two years that I was there was firmly in theoretical linguistics. But at UCLA, I learned about some interesting work in applied linguistics (I had never heard of this field) and made an appointment with Russ Campbell to learn about what they did and the possibility of enrolling in their M.A. program. He went through the list of courses I would have to take including a phonetics course. He was not moved by my telling him that I was Peter Ladefoged's (one of the world's most renowned phoneticians) research assistant and was also an instructor for the linguistics department's phonetics course. And so ended, for the moment at least, my interest in so-called Applied Linguistics.[1]

When my husband, Josh Ard, also a Ph.D. student in linguistics at UCLA, completed his Ph.D. in 1975 and was offered a job at Indiana University, we moved to Bloomington and it was there that my interest in the field of L2 acquisition (SLA) (not the name of the field then)/applied linguistics blossomed. I took a testing course from Harry Gradman and was hooked. At Indiana University, through courses from Albert Valdman and others, I was able to combine my interests in language learning, theoretical linguistics, and Italian. It was years in the making, but finally, I felt that I had found my true comfort zone.

To support my graduate work, I once again found myself in the realm of language teaching, this time English language teaching. I realized immediately that my background in theoretical linguistics was not directly useful as I tried to figure out who I was as a teacher. A memorable experience came when I went to a concert with a fellow-teacher, a woman with many years of teaching experience. She picked up the concert program and started talking about how she could use that program to create an English lesson. I recall being in awe and recognized that a good language teacher, along with having a firm foundation in language pedagogy, was one who was able to see authentic materials in expected and unexpected places.

As I think back on this journey, I realize how difficult it had been to find my true interests partially because these interests were in a field that did not exist as an organized discipline. *Language Learning* was the only journal dedicated to the field of language learning and even that journal was largely focused on pedagogy. Other important journals, such as *Studies in Second Language Acquisition, Applied Linguistics, Applied Psycholinguistics* and *Second Language Research* did not enter the scene until much later and to this day, new journals, focusing on more specific areas of the field (e.g., *Language Learning and Technology*) are appearing with increased frequency.

Finding an academic niche

Perhaps it was the fact that I struggled to find my interests and the fact that when I did, there was not a ready niche for me to fit into, that I became a strong advocate for the viability of

[1] I say 'so-called' because, as will be seen later in this paper, I do not like the term 'Applied Linguistics', given its all-encompassing use. Other than theoretical syntax/phonology/semantics, everything else dealing with language has been lumped under what in my view is a meaningless term, namely 'Applied Linguistics'.

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the field of SLA and for the value of the field in understanding general issues of language (see Gass & Ard 1980, 1984; Gass 1983, 1988, 1989; Gass & Schachter 1989; Spinner & Gass in press). I was beginning my research at a time when there was a strong impetus to demonstrate the lack of relevance of the first language (L1) when learning a second (Dulay & Burt 1973, 1974a, 1974b; Bailey, Madden & Krashen 1974; Krashen 1977, 1982), and the prime role of the L2 in guiding language development.[2] Perhaps naively, I forged ahead looking at the force of language universals while being mindful of the forces of the native language. In my view, then, I could not imagine a world in which the native language was not a strong force. Over the years I continued to argue for an approach to learning that encompassed both native language influences and language universals (Gass 1984, 1989).

My first position post-Ph.D. was at the University of Michigan where I was strongly supported in my approach by Larry Selinker, who took my suggestion seriously of hosting a conference dedicated to a more nuanced and in-depth look at the role of the native language. This conference, held in March 1981, included scholars who had been around since the early years of the field, namely Pit Corder, and some newer scholars, Eric Kellerman, all of whom were concerned with furthering the emerging view (cf. Wode, 1977; Zobl 1980) of the importance of the L1, albeit in non-traditional ways (cf. Gass 1984). The co-edited volume (Gass & Selinker 1983) was a result of this conference.

The field in the mid-to-late 70s was dominated by a view that rejected the role of TRANSFER given its association with behaviorism. Another construct that was ripe for investigation was that of INPUT, which was on the one hand associated with behaviorism and, in particular, with imitation as the leading explanation of (child) language learning and, on the other, associated with Krashen's monitor model as an explanation of L2 learning. Once again, Larry Selinker provided financial and moral support as I organized a conference on this topic at the University of Michigan, out of which came the book I co-edited with Carolyn Madden (1985), *Input in second language acquisition*.

My own career took a new direction, when Litsa Varonis took a position at the English Language Institute. Her background was in sociolinguistics (having come from working at the University of Pennsylvania with William Labov). We began a collaboration that lasted almost 15 years and that included nearly a dozen articles and numerous conference presentations. The main thrust of our research was related to the ways natives and non-native speakers speak to one another and the learning that resulted.

Thus, my research from the 80s and into the 90s had two directions: the one that focused on linguistically oriented research (including processing) and the one that focused on interaction. To this day, both of these research areas influence my thinking and my interests continue to include both.

In the 1970s when I was beginning my career, there was a lot less to know. One could quite easily be somewhat well versed in a variety of areas while still maintaining a deep attachment with one's own area of specialty. This is no longer the case, a fact that I return to below. I recall hearing Gillian Brown end a plenary (British Association of Applied Linguistics

[2] It was important to take a step back at this time and reexamine the Lado (1957) position of the L1 as the driving force and the Dulay and Burt (1974) and Krashen (1982) position of the L2 as the driving force. Clearly, there was room for both as well as for the influence of universals.

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conference, 1999) with words to this effect, in her discussion of the fragmentation of 'Applied Linguistics'. She expressed her relief at having entered the field at an earlier stage when there was a smaller and more coherent body of knowledge, making staying on top of the field a more manageable task. As the field involves greater and greater specialization and develops a large body of research from an L2 perspective and from a source-field perspective, these sentiments ring truer and truer. We have moved from a wheel and spokes field to a field that is dynamic, with each part impacting other parts. The wheel has without a doubt become more complex.

As specialization continues with the resultant fragmentation, I bemoan the loss of the understanding of our roots and our history and, perhaps most importantly, a lack of recognition of the big picture of the field. Time and time again, I have seen in print or heard in conversation comments that reflect a lack of deeper understanding of the field. I have witnessed so-called courses that purport to be an overview of the field of SLA, but which are mired in only one myopic area. Thomas (1998) raised this important point in her article on 'ahistoricity'. She was right in emphasizing the importance of historical roots, but the question she implicitly raises is how far back does one need to go? In their response to Thomas's article, Gass et al. (1998) agree that historical awareness is relevant, but also argue that it is not necessary to go back to antiquity given the lack of significant work from that era that has been discovered. They further argue that the foundations of the field should be theoretical foundations and not merely historical ones. Nonetheless, the significance of this exchange, whatever side of the debate one wants to take, is that the present needs to be understood in the context of its past.

What is the 'field' and which field are we talking about, anyway?

The task assigned for this article was, *inter alia*, to discuss the Applied Linguistics scene more generally. The implicit assumption is that my own work is part of Applied Linguistics. In my view, the term 'Applied Linguistics' is used far too loosely and far too blithely to have meaning. It has taken on such a broad sweep of meanings that it is hard to determine what it is and what it is not. To some, it is anything but theoretical syntax/phonology/semantics. Based on this view, attempting to understand the grammar of Swahili is linguistics, but attempting to understand the grammar of a French speaker learning Swahili is not. But what is the latter? Clearly, it is part of SLA, but is it part of 'Applied Linguistics'? The same constructs used to study L1 acquisition of Swahili are used to study the acquisition of an L2. Does the fact that someone knows another language move the research of the language from one field to another?

Definitions of Applied Linguistics are far-reaching, but they do have in common the idea of addressing 'language-related concerns' and 'language-related issues that affect individuals and society' (American Association for Applied Linguistics (AAAL)) or 'practical problems of language and communication' (International Association de Linguistique Appliquée (AILA); see www.aaal.org and www.aila.info/en/about.html for the full text from these two organizations). As can be seen, numerous disciplines are included, making the so-called field vacuous. One is forced to question some of the subfields listed. For example, what real-world

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'problem' does the study of L1 acquisition address? (Note that language disorders is a separate category). Understanding how L2s are learned may or may not be part of Applied Linguistics, depending on its focus. It is not my intent to belabour the point in this article, but I often wonder if we are misusing the term 'Applied Linguistics' and are attempting to unify too many disparate areas under one common umbrella when the umbrella does not stretch far enough. de Bot (2015) attempts to do just that in his book titled *A history of applied linguistics: From 1980 to the present* by coming up with a definition of Applied Linguistics in which he equates SLA with Applied Linguistics (p. 34). This flies in the face provided by the majority of those he interviewed in the book who opted for a broad definition 'that focuses on real world problems that can be solved with linguistics means' (p. 33). Unfortunately, in his list of significant contributors to the 'field', he includes scholars whose work would not meet the criterion of problem-solving and others whose work would not meet the criterion of doing SLA work.

So, let me return to a characterization of what the field is. My first point (which some might consider blasphemous!) is that I would not continue using the term 'Applied Linguistics' without a clearer (non-garbage can) definition of what is included. I recognize that this is not possible given that we have journals with those words in the title: *Applied Linguistics, Annual Review of Applied Linguistics, International Journal of Applied Linguistics,* and so forth. I am not advocating a change of name for national affiliates nor for AILA; after all, I spent six years as President of AILA and a year as President of the American affiliate, AAAL. What I am advocating is giving greater thought to what we include. In the UK, a council was established in 2009 'to provide a unified voice on public policy matters for linguistics within the UK higher education community.' It is interesting that this council (University Council of General and Applied Linguistics) throughout its website separates out general and applied linguistics, perpetuating the idea that there are such things called general linguistics (I suppose that refers to syntax, phonology, semantics of natural languages) and applied linguistics. One wonders: does the latter refer to everything else? In closing this section, I propose that a more useful approach might be not to think of boundaries (rigid or soft), but to think of the core (i.e., prototypical areas of study) of Applied Linguistics and peripheral areas, although even with this approach, one might be hard-pressed to come up with a well-agreed-upon core.

SLA

This brings me to the scope of SLA. Is it part of the everything else? Does that mean (if my interpretation of what is meant by general linguistics is correct) that L2s are not 'natural' languages? I won't go into the implications of the latter because that has been the subject of much scholarly debate over the past 40 years or so. What I do want to address is the scope of SLA. Has it so become so fragmented that it is not even a field? The point I will make is that it is fragmented, but it is still a field with a unified mission.

SLA, as a discipline, had its origins in language teaching in the sense that one wanted to understand how languages are learned in order to provide better materials for language teaching (see Lado 1957 and a review in Gass with Behney & Plonsky 2013). All of this work was firmly grounded in the linguistics of the time. As the field developed an identity

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of its own, separating itself from the practical issues of language teaching, it remained heavily dependent on linguistics. This was largely due to the fact that those conducting research at that time had their degrees (and hence training) in Linguistics. One's academic training is not easily changeable, although clearly new interests develop and new ways of looking at a phenomenon come about. Nonetheless, in the end, one's basic orientation is by and large shaped by the work done in graduate school, or even as an undergraduate. As linguistics, as a discipline, diversified, and began to include more so-called hyphenated fields (e.g., sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics; see Spolsky 1968, p. 154), training of future L2 researchers reflected that diversification. By the 1980s, many prominent researchers came from linguistics as well as psychology and sociolinguistics, to name a few of the source disciplines. Over the years, other scholars have come on board with their feet firmly implanted in neurolinguistics as well. What this has meant is that one has to be up-to-date in one's own special area of SLA, but also in recent scholarship in the source discipline. For many, if not most, time precludes being well versed in more than one's specific area of scholarship.

Autonomy in the making

Until 1990, the annual AAAL conference had been held in conjunction with the annual Linguistic Society of America (LSA). In the late 1980s, it became apparent that linguistically oriented SLA was not a true reflection of the broader field of Applied Linguistics. An AAAL task-force was established by Lyle Bachman, the then AAAL President, with the express purpose of determining if the AAAL–LSA link was the best for the field of Applied Linguistics. I chaired that task-force, which included a wide representation of U.S. scholars;[3] the outcome was a recommendation to hold our own annual conference separate from LSA. As I noted in my AAAL anniversary comments (see AAAL website; https://app.box.com/s/9xzdthp3ex9n143tou3m), 'It was our strong belief that despite the significant support from the LSA central office, it was time to branch out on our own and . . . hold our own stand-alone annual meeting. We believed strongly that the interest in applied linguistics was broad and that what was needed was an independent organization.'

The conference itself represented an expansion of scope. What had started out in the early years of AAAL as the major impetus of L2 research – linguistics – had now become less prevalent. Many who considered themselves formal linguists saw their research as part of linguistics, or even more broadly, cognitive science, and not at all related to Applied Linguistics. Their research agenda was to provide a window onto the human mind.

From my vantage point, a negative consequence of the changing emphasis of AAAL (and the general field of Applied Linguistics) was the fact that scholars in some research areas no longer felt that they had a comfortable home in the new AAAL environment, as noted above. As an example, researchers who considered SLA from a formal perspective established a conference dedicated to generative approaches to SLA (GASLA), which held its 13th conference in 2015. Splintering off into separate disciplines is a not unexpected

[3] To the best of my recollection, the following were members of the task force: Courtney Cazden, Sandra Savignon, Debora Tannen, Elaine Tarone, Richard Tucker. My apologies for omissions and/or commissions.

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consequence of specialization, but negatively impacts the field in that it makes it more difficult for researchers both internal and external to the field to understand the totality of the phenomenon under investigation. Of course, other specialized conferences exist as well and, one would imagine that the future will only produce more and more separation when what is needed is more and more overall understanding and cross-fertilization.

Future issues

Not having the benefit of a crystal ball, I can only look at the current trajectory, which in many cases has not changed in scope in significant ways over the years, even though the sophistication of the questions and the methods of analysis have changed.

1. What is the capacity for human language? This has been part and parcel of the literature since the early stages of the field. From a formal perspective, one needs to understand what the possible successes in learning a L2 are and where 'complete' success is not possible. Does language learning depend on innate capacities or do patterns from the input emerge? My own view is that there are constraints on language learning and that coming to the same knowledge and use as a native speaker in post-pubescent learning is not possible. I also take the position that there are universal constraints on learning, which may be innate; the input interacts with these. Perspectives that advocate innateness and those that argue for emergentism are not necessarily in opposition. The question is: where is the intersection?
2. Related to this is the vantage point from which we examine the 'state-of-mind' of those with knowledge of multiple languages. Cook (2016) considers two perspectives: the monolingual and the bilingual. From the monolingual perspective, one:

> sees ... L2 users from the point of view of the monolingual ... L1 user. In this case the second language is added on to the speaker's first language, something extra; the L2 user's proficiency in the second language is measured against the sole language of the monolingual; ideally the L2 user would speak the second language just like a native speaker' (p. 1).

In some sense, this describes mainstream L2 research, as it has developed over the years. Researchers who investigate learning from the bilingual perspective see:

> L2 users from the point of view of the person who speaks two or more languages. From this angle, the other languages are part of the L2 user's total language system, each language potentially differing from that of someone who speaks it as a monolingual. It is beside the point whether the L2 user's final ability is identical to that of a monolingual native speaker. Bilingualism and multilingualism research have mostly asked questions about how L2 users use the other languages and how the languages connect in multilingual communities, not about how L2 users compare with monolingual individuals and communities. (Cook 2016: 1–2)

These are two very different perspectives from which one can attempt to understand the knowledge of a multilanguage individual and the use of different languages by that individual. Cook (1991) refers to this as 'multi-competence' and further notes (Cook 2016: 2) that the term was coined 'to complement the term 'interlanguage', which refers solely to the L2 component in the bilingual mind, ignoring the L1 component.

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Multi-competence saw second language acquisition as involving the whole mind of the L2 user, not just the second language . . . ' The papers in Cook & Wei (2016) attest to the vibrancy of this perspective.

3. Among the significant, and among the earliest, influences on the development of an L2 is the role played by the native language (or other languages known). This has ceased being a major emphasis in today's research, but the specifics are far from resolved; the issue continues to be investigated, if not in the forefront, at least as a background issue. We have seen a variety of viewpoints taken on this over the years and the pendulum has swung many times. There is no doubt that the role played by the native language will always remain an important one in L2 research (see (a) the 1996 special issue of *Second Language Research* (12.1) and (b) the 2013 workshop titled 'Native language influence in second language acquisition' organized by Herschensohn & Young-Scholten at the International Congress of Linguists). The findings have become more nuanced over the years and have ceased to be a reflection of linguistic hiccups (see Sharwood Smith 1978, cited in Kellerman 1979), as was the case when contrastive analysis was the driving force of this research area.
4. What are the societal and/or interpersonal factors that come into play when learning an L2? How does language learning rely on interactions with others (see Mackey, Abbuhl & Gass 2012; Gass & Mackey 2014 for reviews)? This research approach brings in not only interaction-specific events, but investigates how individual characteristics (e.g., working memory capacity) and context (e.g., classroom) work together to promote learning. This is a particularly fruitful area because it incorporates what a learner brings to the context of learning and how learning involves others and in what context.
5. In what ways are individuals similar in their capacity for learning additional languages beyond the first and in what ways are they different? In this area, research will continue to investigate differences from a personal perspective (e.g., motivation – see Ushioda & Dörnyei 2012 and Papi & Teimouri 2014) as well as from a cognitive perspective (e.g., working memory – see Williams 2012). With regard to language teaching, this may turn out to be a particularly important avenue of research.
6. Can the processing of an L2 ever be native-like? Psycholinguistic processing is a research area that has gained traction in recent years and will continue to be significant as we seek to understand the nature and capacity of L2 knowledge and use, with journals, such as *Applied Psycholinguistics*, being devoted to the study of psychological processes and a newer journal *Linguistic Approaches to Bilingualism*, including psycholinguistic and processing as one of the areas of bilingual investigation.
7. Methodology and sophistication of analysis are areas that have seen rapid growth in the past few years. One cannot underestimate the importance of having a solid footing in the area of research design (see Gass & Mackey 2015) and analysis/reporting (Plonsky & Gass 2011; Plonsky 2013, 2014; Plonsky & Oswald 2014; Norris et al. 2015; Plonsky 2015, 2016). This involves in-depth facility with research tools and tools of analysis.
8. Instrumentation. If one of the goals of SLA research is to understand what is in the mind of the learner, we will need to rely on instrumentation to do that. We have seen the eye-tracker come into prominence and one imagines that neurolinguistic tools will also come into greater use. Unfortunately, the cost of the machines is prohibitive and cannot be purchased solely with university funds. Grants will have to play a more important role in L2 research, a point I return to below.

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9. As research progresses and more and more studies appear which move the discipline (and sub-disciplines) forward, we will have to have a way of pulling together what might at times seem to be contradictory results. Meta-analysis is a tool that has gained prominence on the pages of the journals. Position and 'how to' papers have appeared on meta-analysis (Oswald & Plonsky 2010; Plonsky 2012; Plonsky & Oswald 2012; Plonsky & Brown 2015) as well as actual meta-analyses have been conducted on a range of topics: (a) Linck et al. (2014) on working memory; (b) Norris & Ortega (2000) on the effectiveness of instruction; (c) Indefrey (2006) on hemodynamics of L1 and L2 processing; (d) Lee, Jang & Plonsky (2015) on pronunciation instruction; (e) Plonsky (2011) on strategy instruction, (f) Li (2010) on corrective feedback; (g) Spada & Tomita (2010) on type of instruction and type of language feature; (h) Russell & Spada (2006) on corrective feedback; (i) Mackey & Goo (2007) on interaction-based research; and (j) Shintani, Li & Ellis (2013) on comprehension-based versus production-based grammar instruction, to name only a few recent articles.

   Many of the comments above reflect directions that are current today and in some sense I have fallen into the same trap of perpetuating dichotomies by listing research areas as separate entities. This brings me to the final direction, namely . . .

10. Finding common ground. I have emphasized in earlier parts of this paper the potential danger of moving in separate areas with little communication or cross-fertilization of research. This division is echoed in the multi-authored contribution (Hulstijn et al. 2014) when they say:

> For some, research in learning and teaching of a second language runs the risk of disintegrating into irreconcilable approaches to L2 learning and use. On the one side, we find researchers investigating linguistic-cognitive issues, often using quantitative research methods including inferential statistics; on the other side, we find researchers working on the basis of sociocultural or sociocognitive views, often using qualitative research methods including case studies and ethnography (pp. 361–362).

   The divide they refer to and to which I have alluded to above is one that is likely over the years to continue to be contemplated with the idea that both cognitive and social (as well as other areas of research) are complementary rather than polar opposites. The special issue of *Studies in Second Language Acquisition* (36.3), in which the Hulstijn et al. papers appear, contains papers that attempt to address the division and seriously investigate whether the 'gap is ontological (i.e., what is the phenomenon we should be studying?), epistemological (i.e., how should we be studying it?), or both?' (p. 362). The various perspectives that one takes on language and, hence, on L2 learning will continue to be a source of debates and challenges, but one hopes ultimately, collaboration. Or, at least minimally, as the editors of this 2014 volume state (p. 415) there will be 'attempts to understand views on the other side, which cannot but lead one to reflect on one's own stance.'

How does the field of SLA move forward?

The field of SLA has not received the same disciplinary recognition as have other more 'established' fields. (e.g., chemistry, physics, English). One way to think about recognition is to consider the extent to which there are autonomous units of Applied Linguistics or

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SLA/SLS (second language studies). From my vantage point, the parasitic status of Applied Linguistics/SLA/SLS in many universities is problematic.[4] Greater autonomy is one sort of recognition. Thomas (2013) reviews nine Ph.D. programs in the U.S. that have achieved that autonomy, although she is quick to point out that this is not the only route, or even the best route, for preparation in the general field of L2 studies. The nine programs that she reviews are the only ones that confer the Ph.D. degree in SLA/SLS and that focus on learning as opposed to pedagogy. A way to move the field forward is continued growth of unique programs in SLA or in Applied Linguistics. This indicates the value that scholars in universities place on the discipline.

Stand-alone programs, however, run the risk of isolationism and it is important not to follow down that path. For fields such as SLA and/or Applied Linguistics, because research is inherently based on research conducted in other disciplines, greater interdisciplinarity is crucial to our survival. But to ensure our vitality, we cannot just take; we must give as well. We must make sure that our findings move our field forward, but also make important inroads to other source fields (e.g., education, linguistics, psychology, sociology). Within university contexts, courses offered should attract students from a wide range of disciplines. A linguistics student should be interested in the linguistics of interlanguages as well as the linguistics of 'natural' languages; a psychology student should be interested in how L2 speakers process language, not just how this is done by native speakers. One could go on and on with examples, but suffice it to say that isolationism will get us nowhere.

We can no longer rest on our laurels; proactivity will be crucial to the vitality of the field. Proactivity can come in many forms, but our ability to receive funding for our research is important, not only from the value of grants alone, but because without funding, our research agenda will be stymied. For example, in many instances, sophisticated and expensive equipment is needed; in others, small datasets will no longer be acceptable and funds will be needed to purchase or obtain access to larger corpora.

Applied Linguistics, however defined, has the capacity to deal with issues that are important to the lives of many. Those issues (such as migration and language learning by non-literate populations) will be with us for years to come and, we alone, can make important inroads into helping others understand the issues as well as working toward ameliorating the conditions of many.

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[4] I write this from the perspective of the U.S. academic scene as that is the context with which I am most familiar. The issue of 'value' and/or 'respectability' is not the same in all parts of the world.

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