

Korea TESOL Journal

Reviews of Books

Supplement to Vol. 11, No. 2



Supplement to Korea TESOL Journal

This supplement to the *Korea TESOL Journal*, Vol. 11, No. 2 consists of reviews of English language teaching books prepared earlier for inclusion in the *Korea TESOL Journal*. It is our hope that you will find their content to still be of value.

Korea TESOL Journal
Reviews Editor
Dr. David E. Shaffer

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Language Learner Strategies: 30 Years of Research and Practice

*Andrew D. Cohen and Ernesto Macaro (Eds.).
Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.
Pages: viii + 344. (ISBN-13: 978-0-19-442254-3 Paperback)*

Reviewed by Andrew Finch

The field of language learner strategies (LLS) is a young one, as the introduction to this book points out. During the 30 or so years since the initial work on “Good Language Learners” (Rubin, 1975), there has been great attention by teachers and researchers to LLS as a means of improving the teaching and learning of second languages. Rubin’s seminal paper also marked the first instance of a student-centered approach in ELT, since it focused on what learners do, and took the responsibility for learning (and improving its effectiveness) to them.

This field has been the subject of controversy during its short life, and while reading the “Foreword” to this well-written and information-packed book, it becomes clear that the many expert contributors are highly aware that research into LLS is extremely complex and requires “more rigorous research designs and practices, and more tangible and useful applications for teachers and learners” (p. vii). It is also interesting to read in the first chapter of Part I (“Claims and Critiques,” by Michael Grenfell and Ernesto Macaro) that respected authors such as Zoltan Dornyei and Peter Skehan have moved “from their early position of ‘sceptical but supportive,’ with regard to the value of LLS research, to a position of ‘sceptical and dismissive’” (p. 25). In the light of these varying views, it is not surprising that authors and researchers on both sides consider that LSS is at a crossroads, having completed its first exploratory stage, and look forward to a future of greater theoretical depth, rigor of research, and practical application.

This book is, therefore, a significant volume, reviewing the findings so far, and pointing out the directions that lie ahead. Written by 26 internationally respected authors, all of whom are experts in LLS, its genesis is typical of the cooperative approach which can be found throughout (only one chapter is written by a single author). *Language Learner Strategies* emerged in its final form as the result of a series of planning meetings (in Singapore, Oxford, and elsewhere), which led to 23 international scholars coming together in Oxford in June 2004 to discuss “crucial issues relating to strategies for language learning and for language use” (p. 2). At this time, it was decided to rigorously address the main themes that had arisen, first by constructing of a survey,

which would be sent to all the experts and would explore how they felt about theory and terminology in LLS research, and then by writing this book. The results of the survey, which the authors suggest might be the first of its kind in applied linguistics, are presented in chapter 2.

This careful approach is evident throughout the book, in the organization, the sequencing of chapters, and in the final “extra” chapter, in which the two editors provide a ten-page conclusion: “LLS and the Future: Resolving the Issues.” This chapter was written separately by the editors, who then came together to comment, discuss, and revise their texts before showing their final version to the team of authors for their opinions.

It should be noted that the intended audience is quite specific. The purpose of this multi-authored book, as mentioned in the “Introduction,” is

First and foremost to appeal to experts in the field in that it represents cutting-edge thinking. The level and style should also be appropriate for postgraduate students and teacher-researchers who are interested in learner strategy research. (p. 2)

While this book is an excellent reference and source of informed debate, it must be realized that the chapters use a rigorous, detailed style of presentation which is fitting for high-level academic papers, but which will not be immediately accessible (or easily readable) for the casual reader. Having made this point, it is obvious that a lot of thought has gone into the construction, as well as the content, of this book. *Language Learner Strategies* is not the usual collection of articles dealing with a main theme according to the preferences of the invited authors. Instead, the pre-writing meetings have resulted in a well-sequenced series of chapters, dealing with the issues in a logical way, each leading into the next chapter, and expanding the reader’s awareness of problems and future directions.

There are two parts to the book. Part I deals with “Issues, Theories and Frameworks” and presents seven chapters which investigate various important and contemporary issues. These lead into Part II, “Reviewing Thirty Years of Empirical LLS Research,” which contains five review chapters, all of them excellent sources of research findings for graduate students and others. Finally, the two editors have appended a “Conclusions” chapter, summarizing the book as a whole and looking at the future of LLS.

It is difficult to do justice to the density and depth of the writing, and even more difficult to summarize the contents of the book, of which five chapters are extensive reviews of research, packed with significant comments and findings. This review, therefore, presents a brief survey of the contents, mentioning the areas covered by them, and leaving the reader to discover the wealth of information and informed comment contained within each chapter.

Part I

Chapter 1: “Claims and Critiques,” by Michael Grenfell and Ernesto Macaro. This chapter provides an interesting read, coming right after the “Introduction” by the two editors. The reader’s suspicion, gleaned from the “Foreword” and the “Introduction”), that there are many issues (including the definition of LLS) to be explored, is amply justified as the two

authors take us through the history of LLS, describing the shifting perspectives of early research and early criticisms (e.g., the “research-then-theory” approach), and taking us on to more recent critiques, such as ones voiced by Dornyei and Skehan, who point out that LLS “cannot be at the same time cognitive, emotional *and* behavioral” (p. 25). While Grenfell and Macaro do well to present us with the opposing views in this way, and while this book sets out to examine such criticisms in a rigorous manner, it might have been better if this chapter had not tried to dismiss them at once, focusing on whether the relevant papers had appropriate references or not. The fact that valid doubts have been raised (e.g., the metacognitive nature of many strategies, which make them difficult to observe and teach) should be sufficient at this point in the book.

Chapter 2: “Coming to Terms with Language Learner Strategies: Surveying the Experts,” by Andrew D. Cohen. This chapter looks at definition problems and reports on the construction of a survey administered to various strategy experts. As well as describing how the survey questionnaire was constructed and administered (a valuable example in methodology for postgraduate students), key findings are presented, describing the contrasting views that emerged (e.g., that strategies need to be small and specific, or more global, flexible, and general).

Chapter 3: “Bridging the Gap Between Psychological and Sociocultural Perspectives on L2 Learner Strategies,” by Rebecca L. Oxford and Karen Schramm. It is good to see attention to these two perspectives in this book, since it is only recently that they have been fully acknowledged in ELT theory. The term “psychological” needs clarification, however, since it is used earlier in the book to refer to behaviorism, so that this chapter does well to define its terms from the start. Even before this, however, the reader is presented with a statement by a contemporary author, regarding the issue involved:

The ontological conflict in SLA between cognitive and sociocultural orientations ... seems irreconcilable. (Canagarajah, 2006, p. 28)

This quote is typical of the book in at least two ways. Firstly, it presents the issue clearly and without fear of its implications, and secondly, the language used is uncompromising in its use of appropriate technical terms to fix meaning unambiguously. Having worked through the perceived differences in perspectives, the conclusion to this chapter refers to Bakhtin concerning the need for communication – in this case, between proponents of the two standpoints.

Chapter 4: “Applying Strategies to Contexts: The Role of Individual, Situational, and Group Differences,” by Osamu Takeuchi, Carol Griffiths, and Do Coyle. Learning context has become an important feature of LLS research, having been largely ignored in the earlier years. The term “context,” in this chapter, refers to age, gender, motivation, career orientation, personality type, nationality, proficiency, and learning situation – a daunting collection of variables. The first section of this chapter looks into these variables, leading (after two more sections) into a final section, which emphasizes the importance of considering individual and situational variables.

Chapter 5: “Research Methods in Strategy Research: Re-examining the Toolbox,” by Cynthia White, Karen Schramm, and Anna Uhl Chamot. The authors here take the critiques of

chapter 1 and address them, taking the opportunity to discuss LLS research methods and “think-aloud” protocols. Having looked at new contexts such as online learning, they call for a broadening of research techniques, putting practitioners and learners at the center of the research.

Chapter 6: “L2 Grammar Strategies: The Second Cinderella and Beyond,” by Rebecca L. Oxford and Kyoung Rang Lee with Gloria Park. This previously unexplored aspect of LLS research provides interesting reading, as the authors look for a theory of grammar strategies. They present four possible instructional modes, or theoretical frameworks, acknowledging that these are only the beginning. While language learners seem to go along with the grammar instruction mode of the institution at which they are studying, the authors point out that the learners’ own goals and beliefs can be more important in creating learning strategies.

Chapter 7. “Intervening in the Use of Strategies,” by Joan Rubin, Anna Uhl Chamot, Vee Harris, and Neil J. Anderson. The final chapter of Part I looks at the topic of intervention, raising the issue of implicit vs. explicit teaching of strategies. Having looked at current practice in SBI (strategy-based instruction), and assuming the validity of the explicit perspective, the authors present five underlying principles: relevance to learners, success, awareness of the sources of variation in learning, scaffolding, and time. The conclusion to this chapter then looks ahead to Part II, lending coherence and direction to the book as a whole, and preparing the reader for the following pages.

Part II

Part II presents five chapters which systematically review the research literature in terms of applying LLSs to specific learning tasks and skills. Having read in Part I about the different issues, perspectives, and approaches, the reader has a valuable opportunity in these five chapters to read comprehensive reviews of the main research findings to date, providing an excellent benchmark, or map reference, for the crossroads mentioned at the beginning of the book:

Chapter 8: “A Review of Listening Strategies: Focus on Sources of Knowledge and on Success,” by Ernesto Macaro, Suzanne Graham, and Robert Vanderplank.

Chapter 9: “A Review of Reading Strategies: Focus on the Impact of First Language,” by Lynne Erlen and Claudia Finkbeiner.

Chapter 10: “A Review of Oral Communication Strategies: Focus on Interactionist and Psycholinguistic Perspectives,” by Yasuo Nakatani and Christine Goh.

Chapter 11: “A Review of Writing Strategies: Focus on Conceptualizations and Impact of First Language,” by Rosa M. Manchon, Julio Roca de Larios, and Liz Murphy.

Chapter 12: “A Review of Vocabulary Learning Strategies: Focus on Language Proficiency and Learner Voice,” by Martha Nyikos and May Fan.

Finally, the editors, Andrew D. Cohen and Ernesto Macaro, present their “Conclusions,” focusing on two main questions: (a) Has the book fulfilled the requirement of exemplifying community inquiry? and (b) Has it shown that community inquiry is best served by introspection and auto-critique, rather than protectionism? A telling comment on both these questions appears

when the authors refer to a remark made by one of the anonymous reviewers, suggesting that LLS authors belonged to “a strategies club.” The reaction is to “respectfully disagree” and then to explain their position. Perhaps this is tacit recognition that there are irreconcilable differences still existing – a recognition that appears as early as page 5, where the authors invite the reader to decide whether “the book represents a coherent auto-critique and theoretical synthesis that point the way to the future of LLS research.” For this reason, the last pages of the book offer a proposed future research agenda.

Such a comprehensive tome (344 pages) cannot fail to raise issues and problems concerning a topic that has always been controversial. However, the collaborative and careful approach by the leading experts in the LLS field has produced an excellent reference book, and a valuable state-of-the-art view of LLS, thirty years on. To finish with a comment from the “Foreword”:

This book is a landmark and a monumental collection – an orchestrated attempt by leading researchers in the field to reflect on 30 years of research and outline a research agenda. This kind of collective self-reflection is not often seen in SLA research communities. (pp. vii-viii)

THE REVIEWER

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Task-Based Language Education

Kris Van den Branden (Ed.).

Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006.

Pages: ix + 284. (ISBN-13: 978 0 521 68592 6 Paperback)

Reviewed by Grace H. Wang

Task-Based Language Education is a remarkable volume that offers an unprecedented look at the development and implementation of task-based education on a massive scale. Led by Professor Kris Van den Branden and his team of researchers at the Centre for Language and Education of the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven in Flanders, the educational innovation that was accomplished in this northern region of Belgium is especially notable for its radical departure from the traditional teacher-oriented audiolingual teaching practices that were prevalent in the region at its inception.

This volume presents a detailed look at how task-based curricula and syllabi were developed, extensive teacher training programs provided, and the practice of task-based teaching (TBT) introduced, in settings which include college-level Dutch as a second/foreign language classes, adult vocational training, language classes for immigrant children, and primary and secondary mainstream education.

Chapter 1 provides an overview of general task-based teaching principles, which are in line with socio-constructivist theories of learning. The often broad and ambiguous concept of “task” is clarified in terms of language learning goals and units of educational activity. Learner and teacher roles are briefly discussed, a theme that is explored in greater depth on several occasions later in the volume, and the idea of task-based assessment is introduced.

Chapters 2 to 4 address the topic of task-based curriculum and syllabus design. Chapter 2 focuses on the learning needs assessment, which is noted as the first step of the task-based curriculum and syllabus planning and development process. The needs assessment is designed to determine: (a) what needs to be learned, (b) why it needs to be learned, and (c) how best it is to be learned. The chapter provides descriptions of several learning needs assessments conducted by the Centre for Language and Education.

Chapter 3 (as well as Chapter 9, as it will be seen) helps to nullify the argument that TBT is most suitable for learners with at least an intermediate to advanced level of language proficiency, or that only adult or young-adult learners may benefit from it. The chapter focuses

on designing task-based curricula for absolute beginners, and describes a detailed and systematic approach to creating a task-based curriculum and syllabus of a language course for immigrant children in their first year in Belgium

Chapter 4 describes the systematic approach that was taken to design task-based Dutch for academic purpose syllabuses, taking into account the special comprehension, production, and cognitive challenges faced by non-native-speaker students in Flemish mainstream primary and secondary education. The chapter includes a detailed discussion of motivation in TBT and how motivating tasks may be designed for this group of learners.

In Chapter 5, the focus shifts from TBT for strictly language learning to TBT for the learning of content, specifically, science subjects and vocational training. The chapter discusses problems with the traditional teacher-oriented delivery of content in science classes. The volume proposes a dual-track solution targeting in-service training at both language teachers and subject teachers: language teachers are trained to prepare their students for mainstream academic courses, while subject teachers are trained to make their technical language use more accessible to learners. In a number of experimental projects, the researchers report:

“the teachers involved in the Limburg task-based experiments were not only convinced of the increased efficiency of their science teaching, but also saw much potential profit in terms of simultaneously raising the pupils' Dutch academic language proficiency (p. 122).

Chapter 6 provides a look at how information communication technology may be used to support TBT and describes examples of interactive software designs that obey the principles of TBT.

Chapter 7 revisits the topic of task-based language assessment, with detailed descriptions of examples of large-scale task-based testing that were introduced in the region of Flanders. The chapter includes an introduction of multimedia task-based tests and discusses the “washback” effect of task-based tests, stating that they were effective as a catalyst for paradigmatic shifts in favor of task-based teaching practices.

Chapter 8 focuses on the role of the teacher in TBT. In this volume, care is taken to suggest that the role of syllabus designers be distinguished from that of teachers. It is proposed that the creation of task-based syllabuses and their associated tasks be trusted to professional syllabus designers so that teachers may focus their attention on using the tasks and maximizing their potential for learners in the classrooms. This chapter looks at how teachers may bring tasks “to life” and motivate and support their learners throughout their task-based lessons.

Chapter 9 offers a look at how TBT may be used to support early second-language acquisition in 2- to 5-year-olds, again, dispelling the common notion that this approach is not suited to young children.

Chapter 10 rounds out the volume with a theoretical and practical look at task-based teacher training, including a detailed description and discussion of a number of studies conducted in Flanders that have investigated the effect a task-based training program that combined in-service training with the introduction of task-based courses.

Task-Based Language Education describes the experience of teachers, syllabus designers, and researchers involved in Dutch language and content courses; as such, it may be less useful than a volume like *Doing Task-Based Teaching* by Willis and Willis (2007) for English language teachers in Korea who are interested in a more practical “how-to” manual on TBT. Another limitation to bear in mind is that the educational innovation described in the volume was accomplished in a Dutch as a second language setting, where the target language is freely spoken and available in the environment. For this reason, among others, the context in which the innovation was accomplished does not directly parallel the Korean context.

Nevertheless, this volume provides a clear, systematic, and thorough treatment of TBT principles, and it should be of great interest to anyone involved in task-based syllabus design, especially for primary and secondary school language programs. It will also be of value to teachers who wish to deepen, substantially, their understanding of TBT principles.

THE REVIEWER

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Novice Language Teachers

*Thomas S.C. Farrell (Ed.).
London & Oakville, CT: Equinox. 2008.
Pages: viii+193. (ISBN: 978 1 84553 402 5)*

Reviewed by Mike Duffy

The book is a collection of eleven case studies of language teachers, all of whom have completed some kind of training and embarked on their first year of teaching. Some are written by the teachers themselves, some by researchers, and some in collaboration. With one exception, which deals with French immersion teaching in Canada, the language being taught is English. Farrell points out in his introductory chapter that the few previous studies of novice teachers (e.g., Richards & Pennington, 1998) have reported that teachers arrive in their classrooms ill-prepared for the realities of their job, and if the book has an overarching theme, it is the disparity between what the teachers experience in their training and the hard realities of working as a teacher.

Steve Mann reports a study of the metaphors used in the journals of five new teachers, MA TEFL holders, to describe their role in the classroom. These include policeman, marketing researcher, ship's captain, engineer farmer mother actress. Mann's chapter sets the tone for the book when he says that the metaphors used change over time, but tend to become less optimistic as time progresses; moreover, six other teachers invited to participate in the study told him they had no time to keep journals.

Chapters by the editor and by Alan Urmston and Martha Pennington, about secondary school teachers in Singapore and Hong Kong respectively, illustrate the conflicts teachers can face between what they have learned in their training and the institutional demands of their workplace. Farrell points out that novice teachers are influenced not only by their training, but by their own long experience as language students, and when they are faced with a real classroom, they may experience what Urmston and Pennington term a "regression to context." Farrell's case study teacher, who had completed a postgraduate diploma in education, experienced conflict between his preferred teaching approach and the expectations of his school, in particular, his department's exam-driven syllabus. He also suffered from a lack of relationships with his senior colleagues, some of whom complained that his attempts at communicative teaching generated too much noise. The Hong Kong teachers appeared less willing to struggle with the system. They had completed a BA in TESL and were returning to teach in the same schools in which they had

been students. Would they have changed the beliefs about teaching and learning that they had formed when they were language learners? The answer was “no,” or if they had, they did not put their new beliefs into practice. A combination of pedagogic culture, demands of exams and of parents, and sympathy with their students drove them towards abandoning the methods they had learned and teaching in the same way they had been taught.

Senior colleagues’ complaints about noisy classrooms were also reported by one of four Thai secondary teachers interviewed by David Hayes. Though one teacher reported that staff had more social contact than was the case in Singapore, the general picture was one of professional isolation, with newly employed teachers left to sink or swim. Indeed, most of the teachers who figure in the book reported lack of support in their early days of teaching, and it seems very few novice teachers receive any induction, mentoring, or professional development once they start work. Even though courses like the CELTA (Certificate in English Language Teaching to Adults) may be conceived as an “initiation” rather than a qualification in teaching, the protective environment of the training center may leave trainees unprepared for realities like monolingual classes, low-level or unmotivated students, and heavy teaching loads. Two of Michaela Borg’s CELTA graduate interviewees coped successfully with some of these difficulties, but one reported herself “traumatized” by her experience of a year teaching children in Europe immediately after completing the course.

Two Japan-based teachers talk about the importance of finding a mentor. An American, Alix Furniss, in journals kept during her first year of teaching at a small town middle school, expresses her frustration at the absence of a mentor, though she also recorded a gain in confidence and knowledge with time. Yukie Iwamura, was able to overcome class management problems with the help of a veteran teacher when she switched from teaching high school students to two-year-olds at a private school. Faced, at the time of writing, with the prospect of becoming a university teacher, her concerns are about teaching methods rather than institutional problems. A chapter by Clea Schmidt suggests that the need to learn to be a teacher is even stronger for NNESTs; six NNESTs enrolled on a C-TESL program in Canada reported a lack of confidence and a sense of inferiority vis-à-vis NSs on their course, and also resentment against the negative attitudes of NS course mates, and employment barriers.

Teresa Ting and Michael Watts provide an account of how a teacher can achieve some self-sufficiency in the story of the former’s progress from 15 years as a biochemist to English teaching at a university in Italy. Having come from a research background, she overcame the lack of collegial support in her early survival phase with the help of reading ELT research papers. Another success story is told by Stephen Moore in a case study of a Cambodian who trained to be a secondary school teacher, but who found herself instead replacing an expat teacher on the B.Ed. course from which she had recently graduated. She had several difficulties to overcome – students’ disappointment at losing their NS teachers, their resistance to CLT, and in many cases, their unwillingness to do homework, but she was well-prepared for these, and eventually won them over.

The book should be of great interest to anyone involved in teacher training. Courses of various kinds train their students in how to teach, but do not show them how to be a teacher: the

message of the book, as I see it, is rather than just teaching methods, educators would do well to prepare would-be teachers for the intuitional difficulties that they are going to face after qualifying. Many of the experiences recorded here will be familiar to readers in Korea, where I should think most language teachers, at universities, public schools, and private language academies, native speaker and local teacher alike, receive no in-service support. Also, unlike the teachers whose stories appear in the book, they have also, in most cases, received no training whatsoever.

Finally, some comments about my experience as a reader. I found the teachers' stories engaging, and occasionally even amusing. However, the word "context" seemed much overused, and there were more solecisms than I would like to see in an ELT book.

THE REVIEWER

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Teaching Grammar Creatively

Gunter Gerngross, Herbet Puchta, Scott Thornbury

Cambridge: Helbing Languages/Cambridge University Press, 2006.

Pages: 267. (ISBN-13: 9783902504296 Paperback with CD-ROM/Audio CD)

Reviewed by Ksan Rubadeau

Teaching Grammar Creatively is a resource book that combines lessons plans and activities for a variety of grammar points in the beginner to intermediate-level ranges. According to its authors, who eschew the explicit, deductive teaching of grammar rules, the book's aim is to "stimulate the imagination, humour and creativity" (p. 5) of learners.

The book is divided into four main chapters ("Basic Phrases Patterns," "Tense, Aspect, and Voice," "Question Forms," and "Complex Sentences") and comprises fifty-three grammar points. Each lesson has two sections. Section A, "Language Awareness Activities," is set up as a complete lesson plan from the introduction of a point to controlled practice. Section B, "Creative Grammar Practice," provides production activities and includes models for text creation. A 12-page introduction describes the theory behind the activity design and supplies helpful teaching tips and suggestions on how to proceed with the lessons. Finally, the accompanying CD-ROM contains audio files, adaptable worksheets, and sample texts.

In their design of Section A, Gerngross, Puchta, and Thornbury very adamantly claim to have turned their back on the traditional "Presentation, Practice, and Production" format of a grammar lesson. In fact, their "Discovery, Consolidation, and Use" model is essentially the same thing, although they do emphasize an inductive approach to teaching and learning. A focus is placed on an all-important concept in modern grammar acquisition theory: noticing. Many types of materials and activities are used to present or elicit the targeted structures: lists from concordancers, songs and films, cartoons, mind maps, drawings on the board, imaginary newspaper headlines, advice columns, pictures, and guessing games. There are even instructions on how to use those old cuisenaire rods. Charts and tables do appear, but always require something from students like rearrangement or completion. Metalinguistic terms like "superlative" or "present perfect" show up in page headings for teachers' reference, but not on any student worksheets.

The tasks in Section B tend to focus on learners sharing personal experiences and creating texts. After viewing a short model text – not a paragraph, but rather a poem – students

reconstruct the text using a skeleton model, and then personalize it. The book's introduction gives suggestions for "anchoring" the texts. Some of the more creative of these include writing the texts on an imaginary TV screen and using a tambourine to beat out the rhythm of underlined parts of the texts. Very useful examples of learners' texts are provided, like this one written by a ten-year-old beginner studying third-person "-s" (the learner's words are underlined; the rest is the gapped model text):

She likes beautiful flowers
she likes her dolls
she likes boys
but
she doesn't like
two things:
thieves and school. (p. 167)

Is the book as creative as its title suggests? Many teachers will recognize the activities, but may not have used them in their grammar lessons, or may have used them for different grammar points. Some variations are very simple, but may be something a teacher would not have thought of before. For example, the lesson on "going to," has a miming game. We have probably all had our beginners act out the present progressive (She's swimming. He's eating), but with "going to" the trick is to get people to guess what the mimes are going to do (i.e., putting a tea bag into a mug and pouring hot water on it: "You're going to have a cup of tea."). In addition to mime activities, visualization techniques are also used innovatively. For the lesson on "used to" students take a meditative "fantasy trip" in which they meet people from a happy time in their childhood and share their experience upon their "return" to the class.

Perhaps more than for its creativity, the book is striking in its humanity. Written as a guidebook in the second-person, it is easy to feel as if the authors are speaking to us directly, and they have peppered their lessons with gentle reminders on how to maintain a safe environment for learners to take risks and make mistakes. They advise us to avoid nosiness, to always give feedback on content before correcting errors, to accept all answers when we elicit (tabling language that we weren't aiming for on a separate section of the board, prepared to incorporate it for future us), and to allow students time for reflection and for pairwork before whole-class sharing. Most of all, they remind us never to ask learners to do something that we would not feel comfortable with ourselves. The authors also include tips like providing a silent period before creative writing and using meditative music at certain stages of a lesson – advice not normally associated with grammar teaching. Affective concerns even pop up in the model texts themselves, which are mainly poems about people's feelings.

Although the structures are often presented creatively, the level of language itself is sometimes a problem. The good point is that the lessons are designed to work with both young learners and adults with variations of model texts. In addition, the use of language from concordancing lists ensures authenticity for many lessons. However, as is often the case with

grammar books, the difficulty of the vocabulary is often out of sync with the level of the grammar point. Would most learners studying the present perfect recognize “milky way” and “galaxies” as required for the “Cosmic Cocktail” in lesson 2.4?

In terms of its practicality, the book has a number of drawbacks. First of all, fifty-three grammar points are not very comprehensive. The authors acknowledge this, stating that they have chosen ones that have proven to be particularly difficult to teach to learners of different nationalities. They also maintain that the book is meant to show ideas that can be adapted to other grammar points. True though this may be for the production activities, the presentation of any given grammar point changes according to the structure at hand, which is why teachers get resource books in the first place. Also, some of the points themselves are perhaps surprising choices. “It’s high time somebody did something” and “to have a try at... -ing” are not commonly seen in grammar books. This is perhaps why the authors chose them; however, these structures do not seem like the most pressing language, considering the limited number of grammar points in the book.

Another problem with the book is its simplification of grammar points as it focuses mainly on just the meaning of structures. There is very limited focus on form, present in some of the charts, and not much on use, as the book does not compare each grammar point to others that could be used instead. This can lead to teaching-generated errors. For example, in the lesson on “you’d better + bare infinitive,” learners are asked to give advice using “you’d better,” the focus being on the base form of the verb that comes after. However, since no other advice structures are practiced, students are likely to come out with an inadequate understanding of when to use “you’d better.” This kind of limited practice may contribute to unnatural language as seen in the following exchange:

Teacher: Let’s pretend I’m a tourist in Seoul. What advice could you give me on what to see first?

Student: You’d better go to Gyeongbok Palace.

Moreover, while occasional tips are given as to contrasts in use, often the teacher is left stranded. For example, in the awareness-raising activity for “there is,” students fill in the blanks of a cartoon, choosing the best option from “A fly is in my soup,” “My soup has a fly in it,” “There’s a fly in my soup,” and “In my soup is a fly.” Surely not all students are going to guess that “There’s a fly in my soup” is the “best” answer. Given that all the options are grammatically correct, how are teachers meant to explain why we would choose one over the other? Unfortunately, the book does not tell us.

There are issues from a cultural perspective: All of the names in the model texts, for example, are Anglo. Also, while the voices on the CD-ROM are clear, and well paced, the accents seem to all be those of British native speakers and not reflective of English as an international language.

Slight changes to the format of the book would also make it easier to use. First of all, the index in the back is inexplicably arranged in the same order as the table of contents, making it difficult to find a particular lesson. The CD-ROM is much better organized, featuring both a

scroll-down menu and the option to type in the page number of a lesson. It also very helpfully allows teachers to edit, print, or project the model texts. However, the text files have no headings or titles, increasing the chances of filing mishaps. Also, the files have been made in a visually unattractive 11-point Lucida Sans-Serif font, with no images, special borders, or colors, meaning that a teacher would have to make considerable changes before actually using the “worksheets” in class.

All in all, *Teaching Grammar Creatively* does have some fresh twists on an old problem: how to teach students structures without the tedium. It would be a good addition to a resource library – not the only book you would use to teach grammar, but part of your armory in the battle against grammar-learning boredom. If your students asked you the difference between “I should have studied when I was in high school” and “I had to study when I was in high school,” this is not the book you would turn to. Nor would it be the place to go for quickly photocopyable blackline masters that you can cut into strips to make a game. However, if you want an injection of fresh ideas on some of the old standards, this might be the book for you.

THE REVIEWER

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Language Policy, Culture, and Identity in Asian Contexts

Amy B. M. Tsui & James W. Tollefson (Ed.).

Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2007.

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Reviewed by Bal Krishna Sharma

The last few decades have witnessed an unprecedented spread of English worldwide. This has had a huge influence on the language policies and practices of countries where English is used as a second or foreign language. The recent, edited volume by Tsui and Tollefson is a welcome addition to the existing body of literature in sociolinguistics and applied linguistics. This volume explores how the globalization of English is reflected in language and education policies and practices of Asian countries, and how this affects the relationship between language, culture, and national identities. The book is organized into three thematic sections that provide case studies of twelve different Asian countries. These three sections are preceded by an introductory chapter at the beginning and a concluding chapter at the end.

The first of the three thematic sections consists of five chapters that discuss the case studies of five Asian countries, and mostly focuses on how these countries have responded to the globalization of English in their government policy documents. K. Hashimoto, in chapter 2, notes that the Japanese government has realized the increased value of the English language, and English is seen as an asset to enrich Japanese culture, fostering bilingualism and multilingualism. Similarly, Yim Sungwon, in chapter 3, argues that the Korean government regards English as a powerful tool to compete with the outer world, and English textbooks and curricula do not only represent globalization but also reflect Korean national identity with the inclusion of Korean history, cultural values, social facts, etc. Chapter 4 offers M. K. David and S. Govindasamy's analysis of English textbooks written by local textbook publishers in which they present a balanced approach taken by these textbook writers to present content from both global and local perspectives. In chapter 5, P. Chew's study shows that Singaporean users of English are motivated more by the pragmatic value of language and that the standard variety of English has attracted the younger generation at the cost of local language varieties. Chapter 6 offers T. Clayton's arguments on the political and cultural transition of Cambodia and its future

challenges in incorporate minority linguistic and cultural groups to foster multilingualism and multiculturalism in the country.

Part II of the volume, entitled “Language Policy and the (Re)Construction of National Cultural Identity,” has three chapters, which present case studies from Hong Kong, Brunei, and New Zealand. Tsui, in chapter 7, discusses in length the colonial history and its impact on language education policy of Hong Kong. Tsui reports that though Hong Kong’s adoption of the Chinese language as the medium of instruction in schools has connected its history and cultural traditions with China again, there is still a tension between globalization and nationalism in shaping language policy. M. Saxena, in chapter 8, discusses the ideological tension between socio-cultural philosophies of Hinduism, Islam, and Western thought, and how policy pressures from above and sociolinguistic practices from below are crucial factors for forming and reforming of multilingual and multicultural identities in Brunei. R. A. Benton (chapter 9) provides a succinct account of the Maori people’s struggle to revitalize the Maori language without excluding English. Benton notes that there still are unequal power relationships between English and the Maori language. These chapters in Part II explore the language policies from a historical perspective and focus on the changes and conflicting discursive practices for identity construction before and after colonization.

Part III consists of four chapters on India, Nepal, Pakistan, and Bangladesh. These chapters discuss the positive and negative roles played by the English language and role of English in multilingual and multicultural conflicts in those countries. R. K. Agnihotri, in chapter 10, points out that language has been used to achieve political ends in the history of India and shows that the dominance of English and Hindi in India has marginalized other languages like Hindustani. In chapter 11, S. K. Sonntag shows how political movement can be instrumental in social inclusion of linguistic minority groups in Nepal. Sonntag further points out that English has been a powerful tool to fight against the dominance of the Nepali language. In chapter 12, T. Rahman, based on his survey, argues that English has promoted the hegemony of elites by marginalizing the local languages. He, therefore, suggests that English-medium schools be phased out and Urdu and other Pakistani languages be used in schools. T. Hossain and Tollefson, in chapter 13, bring into view the picture of Bangladesh, where English-medium education has been confined to the urban middle- and upper-class for their access to higher education and employment. These chapters on South Asian contexts show that English has played an “empowerment role” for a handful of elites, but at the same time, it is a socio-economic divider between the *haves* and *have-nots*.

The greatest strength of the book lies in its presentation of issues of language, culture, and identity from both local and global perspectives at both the policy and practice levels. The chapters offer discussions and debates on language-related issues in countries like Bangladesh, Nepal, Brunei, and Cambodia, which have not often been featured in publications for an international audience. The contributors are scholars who are either researchers of the respective countries or the people who have spent significant spans of time in those countries so that their arguments and observations provide more emic perspectives. They not only express their perspectives on issues of language and society, they also provide evidence through empirical

research findings. The introductory chapter is quite successful in guiding the readers toward what to expect in the rest of the text, and the final chapter quite succinctly summaries what has been discussed in the previous chapters. Some chapter contributors, however, are more successful in making their material accessible to their readers than are others. In addition, some chapters within each thematic section vary in their focus and length in the discussion of issues; readers, therefore, cannot easily expect to make a parallel comparison of the issues and perspectives across different countries within each section. Since the editors suggest that this volume be used as a course book for university students (p. viii), I would love for the book to have provided some discussion questions at the end of each chapter. Graduate students and researchers should nevertheless consult other complementary materials for comprehensive discussion of the issues.

Overall, Tsui and Tollefson's contribution fills a gap in the dearth of materials in the field, and its coverage of issues and perspectives and their detailed accounts overshadow its subtle weaknesses. This volume is one of the very few resources of its kind and will be equally useful for novice and experienced researchers and students in the field of sociolinguistics, language policy and planning, education, applied linguistics, and critical pedagogy.

THE REVIEWER

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Social Networking for Language Education

*Marie-Noelle Lamy & Katerina Zourou (Ed.).
Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan. 2013.
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Reviewed by Chris Miller

It is commonplace to claim technology is constantly revolutionizing our lives. Educational researchers seem to have a particular fascination with exploring the possible benefits of new communications technologies (e.g., Kanno & Norton, 2003). Recently, educational researchers have focused their attention on the promise, and perhaps the drawbacks, of social networking sites (SNS) (e.g., Hitosugu, 2011; Knobel & Lankshear, 2008; Lomika & Lord, 2009). In *Social Networking for Language Education*, Lamy and Zourou further the conversation. The editors explicitly list three “challenges” that the collected works seek to address: (a) understanding “how digital social networking practices can contribute to the wider ecology of language learning,” (b) “the role of digital social language learning in formal and informal contexts,” and (c) demarcating the possible benefits and drawbacks within such environments relative to language learning. A key term used by both the editors and several authors in this volume is “affordance,” which Reinhardt and Chen in their paper define as a “potential for action.” SNSs do offer several affordances not directly possible in more traditional forms of communication (e.g., face-to-face). Several of the contributions attempt to highlight these affordances, with mixed results.

Chapter 1 describes the use of Facebook and RenRen as mediums for second language socialization. Reinhardt and Chen provide a case study analyzing the use patterns of a Chinese postgraduate student studying in the United States. In chapter 2, Wigham and Chanier analyze the possible impact avatar selection may have in communication patterns among architecture students studying either French or English using the website Second Life. The editors themselves provide the third chapter, which details the connection between historical reading groups (dating back to the early 20th century) and an online reading group for professionals in ELT.

Chapters 4 and 5 both consider the website Livemocha; launched in 2007, the site offers some form of instruction for 35 languages. In Chapter 4, Zourou and Loiseau analyze the culture section of the website, focusing on some of the design features, and provide pedagogical recommendations. In Chapter 5, Harrison, somewhat related to the themes of Chapter 2, analyzes

the impact that user profile information has on possibilities for interaction and language learning. In Chapter 6, Fuchs and Snyder consider the now-defunct website Google Wave and the larger role of technology in instructional design. The study focuses on 30 pre-service language teachers in the United States and Taiwan. While many students were initially enthusiastic about the use of Google Wave, the authors note that interaction rarely went beyond the completion of task requirements. This study highlights the role of the instructor in influencing discourse patterns in a classroom via technology or otherwise.

The final section begins with a consideration of the use of three online language-learning sites, Busuu, Livemocha, and English Café, among 21 students from 11 different countries enrolled in an intensive ESL program. Participants in the study completed a series of tasks selected by the researchers and then provided feedback that the researchers analyze and discuss. Somewhat in contrast to Chapter 6, Chapter 8 focuses on a website created by two teachers in a year-long telecollaborative project between students from France and Taiwan. In this study, the authors note the striking differences between interaction in the website designed by the teachers, and in an “unofficial” Facebook group that students created themselves. The latter was much more active and featured a more conversational tone. The authors of the study are quite thorough in their analysis, noting the variety of speech functions used in the Facebook group, such as referential, expressive, directive, phatic, and heuristic speech functions. Chapter 9 features an “autoethnographic” analysis of Gruba and Clark’s use of the language learning websites Busuu, Livemocha, and Babbel. While this study is limited by the researchers’ subjective biases and unsystematic exploration of many of the features of the websites, it does provide a series of insights into a variety of aspects of self-directed language learning. For example, Livemocha uses a points system that can allow a user to gain access to features of the website, such as additional lessons. One way to gain such rewards is through providing reviews of user-submitted learning materials. The researchers note that after completing dozens of reviews, they began to do the minimum to get the points. Hence, this may indicate a negative influence of external incentives in relation to task completion.

Somewhat ironically, the greatest strength of this book comes in the construction of implicit guidelines that emerge from the studies, noting various hazards/problems in the online language-learning environments explored in this volume. Quite a list is generated throughout these articles, as they include multiple references to various forms of either sexual harassment or flirting; unwanted attention, especially from non-native speakers of a language; combative discourse; limited output in and lack of responses to SNS messages among many users; trustworthiness of profile information; quality assurance; and the damaging influence of extrinsic motivation techniques.

Clearly, if some of the current limitations of language learning via SNS media are to be overcome, the research collected by Lamy and Zourou can be of great practical use in informing teachers or site producers of what not to do (or perhaps some guidance into the question of how much). More immediately, these findings offer up a large number of relevant research questions connected to the influence of various treatments. It seems many of the problems related to SNSs for language learning stem from a lack of commitment/investment among users, authority (e.g.,

sites that do not have clear outcomes; a formal teacher), and standards. Future research could, for example, explore the influence of paid membership, or pairing language learners, with a tutor.

While reading this text, the inescapable similarities between language learning via SNS communication and more traditional forms of language learning and simple traditional human interaction became apparent. Impression management remains significant; without investment or commitment, few measurable gains are apparent; without clear guidelines or interested learners, peer assessment is of little value; lacking clear authority, a whole series of maladies emerge. Given that SNSs are still in their infancy, such issues are bound to arise. SNSs offer a wide range of promise to enhance language learning. For instance, as Lamy and Zourou note in their conclusion to this volume, even a relatively “unfocused” SNS like Facebook offers language learners the opportunity to communicate in a less formal, non-academic register. However, the research contained in *Social Networking for Language Education* makes clear that until more detailed forms of gatekeeping, transparency, and rigor from both SNS site managers and language learners using SNSs are in place, the promise of SNSs in the service of language acquisition will remain largely unfulfilled.

THE REVIEWER

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