

Reviews

***Japanese Female Professors in the United States: A Comparative Study in Conflict Resolution and Intercultural Communication.* Masako Hamada. Lewiston, NY: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2006. i +266 pp.**

Reviewed by

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One result of globalization is an increasing interest in other cultures and languages. Educators residing abroad are quasi-cultural ambassadors who not only teach the formal aspects of language but also the pragmatic and cultural. These educators in turn often face a plethora of cultural obstacles in the course of their residence abroad.

This book, based on Hamada's doctoral dissertation, is the first of its kind. It discusses the various challenges Japanese female professors are faced with in university classrooms in the United States. Hamada focuses on the strategies these women use when dealing with academic conflicts and misunderstandings. In relation to this, she is also interested in how length of residence in the United States affects the use of these strategies. In order to investigate this she combined a written survey questionnaire (partially multiple-choice and partially open-ended questions) with open-ended, in-depth guided telephone interviews.

The first part of the book is dedicated to a comprehensive literature review of gender and Japanese culture. Her multidimensional analysis of the challenges facing Japanese women transcends gender and incorporates other factors which can affect communication. These factors are rooted in cultural differences such as conflict avoidance and the preservation of harmony, face-saving, *omoiyari* (empathy), *enryo* (self-restraint), and high context communication. While she illustrates that these factors do affect communication between Japanese female professors and American students, it is a safe assumption that they would also influence intercultural encounters on a more general level as well.

Hamada highlights five styles that her participants used to handle conflicts. These are avoiding, compromising, dominating, integrating, and obliging. The integrating style was the most prevalent way of handling

conflict. This style is characterized by solving an issue with a student. It is also characteristic of a Western approach to handling conflict.

As their length of residence in the United States increased, her participants more frequently utilized the dominant style and less frequently the obliging one. The dominant style is characterized by firmness in pursuing a given position when dealing with a student. Hamada is careful to cite age and increasing experience as contributing factors to the preference for this style besides the obvious "Americanization" of her participants. The obliging style, on the other hand, involves accommodation to students' wishes, and may more accurately characterize a Japanese communicative style. However, in interactions between superiors (i.e., teachers) and subordinates (i.e., students) this is not always the case in Japan.

Finally, Hamada cites the problems precipitating conflict which were mentioned most often in the survey. These are students complaining about grades, not showing respect for professors, classroom behavior (e. g., eating and drinking during class), attempting to negotiate with the professor to change the curriculum, cheating, the language proficiency of the professors, students' lack of preparation, and differences in communication styles. This section of the book is apparently intended to assist Japanese educators with their transition to United States academic culture.

This book is very well written and thus accessible to a wide audience. It includes both quantitative and qualitative analyses which further strengthen the author's claims. Statistical analyses are thoroughly explained so that even a novice can easily interpret the results.

Hamada's book is useful for anyone interested in intercultural education. Expatriate educators in Japan may benefit from knowledge of the various issues facing their counterparts residing abroad.

While Japanese professors in the United States may be the intended readership for this book, any educator involved in instructing pragmatic and cultural aspects of language will find this volume to be a valuable resource. In addition, Japanese learners of English who plan to live or work in North America would benefit from an awareness of the importance of the integrating style of conflict management in United States culture. At the same time, it is crucial for these students to learn that in many Western cultures silence is not golden and success depends upon one's ability to articulate his or her opinions. The adage "the nail that sticks out gets hammered down" translates to "the squeaky wheel gets the grease" in many Western cultures. Hamada eloquently highlights these and many other issues facing those involved in intercultural interactions.

***Language Learners in Study Abroad Contexts.* Margaret A. DuFon and Eton Churchill (Eds.). Clevedon, Buffalo, Toronto: Multilingual Matters, 2006. xii + 329 pp.**

Reviewed by

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While study abroad programs continue to be extremely popular with learners and teachers around the world, research on second language acquisition in study abroad (SA) contexts is still in an early phase of its development. The popular belief that SA programs lead to gains in competence is one of the few generalizations that can perhaps be supported. SA researchers are now expanding their analytical focus to comparative studies and the demonstrably different experiences of learners even within the same study programs and host contexts. On the whole, existing studies provide a series of contradictory findings, depending on learner age, gender, type of study program, language proficiency, relationship with host families, or personality of the learners themselves. These individual and program variables indicate that the process of language acquisition in SA contexts is often far from consistent and unilinear, and presents a series of complex challenges for researchers in the field to map effectively.

Language Learners in Study Abroad Contexts is a welcome addition to the research literature on the subject, offering 10 chapters that combine both theoretical and practical considerations of the major themes. Collecting contributions from nine different authors familiar with SA programs in Japan, Indonesia, Germany, Australia, and the USA, the book's four sections range across a number of areas, from research on gains in linguistic skills, learner motivation, and learner strategies and anxiety to the sociolinguistic and metacognitive knowledge required if SA learners are to be successful (Paige, Cohen, & Shively, 2004).

Chapter 1, *Evolving Threads in Study Abroad Research*, serves as an introduction to the volume as a whole, providing an overview of existing research studies while describing a number of new developments that have occurred over the last 10 years. Research is becoming increasingly analytical, focusing on issues concerning literacy and register, and moving from general proficiency to more detailed studies of grammar, pronunciation, and prosodic language features. Comparative studies

of at-home (AH) and SA programs have emerged, with more attention given to individual learning differences. Lately, following the social turn in SLA, a concern with researching the variables shaping the host context has developed, though these have been limited to only a few languages and programs to date.

Chapters 2 and 3 belong to Part 1 of the book subtitled *The Acquisition of Pragmatic Competence During Study Abroad*. Both chapters explore issues in pragmatics, primarily in relation to strategies for taking leave in Indonesian (Chapter 2), or the conventions governing the use of social address (*Sie/du*) in German (Chapter 3). Both contributions confirm previous research (Barron, 2003), supporting the notion that the conscious awareness of input is extremely important for the acquisition of second language pragmatic knowledge.

In Part 2, Chapters 4, 5, and 6 examine the theme of Interaction and Socialization at the Host Dinner Table, focusing on study abroad contexts in Indonesia and Japan. Issues explored include the socialization of taste in a second-language culture, the expression of folk beliefs in dinnertime conversations with host families, and the acquisition of linguistic and cultural norms in a homestay setting. The main implications arising from the studies supported the notion of a homestay environment as an “opportunity space” to learn the cultural aspects of language, the dynamics of which are not normally available to learners in traditional pedagogical contexts.

The two chapters in Part 3 entitled, *From Home to School in the Study Abroad Environment*, explore the negotiations that occur between the homestay environment and that of a formal teaching context such as a high school. Research findings from the studies in this section focus on the wide variety of performance often found in SA learning environments as compared with study at home.

In the final part of the book, *The Influence of Individual and Program Variables on SLA*, Chapters 9 and 10 discuss issues of learner motivation and attitudes, social networks, and learner strategies. The chapters provide an appropriate closure for the studies contained in the rest of the book by foregrounding the need to focus on the complex relationship between learners’ motivation and the development of appropriate support structures and social networks in an SA context.

Language Learners in Study Abroad Contexts is a valuable contribution to an emerging field, where initiatives have largely been based on an intuitive belief rather than sound research. The three papers that address SA

issues related to Japanese learners will be of particular value to teachers, academics, and coordinators involved in SA programs in Japan. The book should also provide some much needed theoretical input for existing practitioners in the field. It also could act as a reference point for future enquiry by SLA researchers looking for a still emerging disciplinary area that is conducive to original work.

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***Interlanguage Pragmatics: Exploring Institutional Talk.*
Kathleen Bardovi-Harlig and Beverly S. Hartford (Eds.).
Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates. 2005. 230 pp.**

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Behind the walls of various institutions there exist unique ways in which discourse unfolds. These forms of talk have attracted the interest of many scholars, according to Wasson (2000), for example, who acknowledges that there has been “a growing concern with the question of how everyday talk is embedded in institutionalized structures of power” (p. 457). The analysis of how language functions in specific institutional contexts is the subject of *Interlanguage Pragmatics: Exploring Institutional Talk*, edited by Kathleen Bardovi-Harlig and Beverley Hartford, two principal figures in the fields of pragmatics and second language acquisition.

The book piques the reader’s interest from the beginning by outlining the benefits of such research. Bardovi-Harlig and Hartford’s introduction and the first chapter, Institutional Discourse and Interlanguage Pragmatics, explain the benefits of studying institutional talk in terms

of “three primary requirements” (p. 31): comparability, interactivity, and consequentiality. The two editors contend that institutional discourse is comparable since institutions may share the same features within and across them. They also propose that it is interactive in the sense that two people or more are necessary for discourse to occur, and consequential since such talk is situated in situations that have specific objectives.

One group of institutions examined was universities (a university tutor center and a university physics classroom) and secondary schools. In Chapter 2, *Writing Center Interaction: Institutional Discourse and the Role of Peer Tutors*, Jessica Williams compares native speaker (NS) and nonnative speaker (NNS) interactions with NS writing tutors, discovering salient differences in turn construction and organization of discourse. She discloses that social distance between tutor and student varies, with NNS students seeking more tutor assistance and NS students expecting to operate more on an equal footing. In Chapter 3, *Lynda Yates’ Negotiating an Institutional Identity: Individual Differences in NS and NNS Teacher Directives*, the variation of mitigated teacher directives uttered by Australian and Chinese teacher trainees in the secondary school system yields interesting data on how such directive forms correlate with nationality, gender, and individual style. University interaction is the focus of Chapter 5 in which Catherine Evans Davies and Andrea Tyler’s *Discourse Strategies in the Context of Crosscultural Institutional Talk: Uncovering Interlanguage Pragmatics in the University Classroom* examines an incident where a Korean teaching assistant (TA) confronts an American student caught cheating. In this study, Davies and Tyler refer to a unique form of discourse formed by the Korean TA that is referred to as a “third place,” or, in other words, discourse not specifically governed by sole transfer of L1 pragmatic competence into L2 discourse situations. The unique nature of this form of discourse shows that “broad, sweeping notions” (Watts, 2003, p. 101) of culture may tend to view NNS language users in a unidimensional manner and neglect to consider other dynamic forces affecting L2 language use in specific contexts.

Other institutions and milieus that were researched were employment centers, hotels, social service, and doctor-patient contexts. In the job placement center in Chapter 4, *Before, During, and After the Event: Getting the Job (or Not) in an Employment Interview*, Julie Kerekes examines external factors (language ability, background, and others) that affected the outcomes of gatekeeping encounters with temporary industrial job applicants. In Chapter 6, *English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and Interlanguage Pragmatics (ILP)*, Elaine Tarone asserts that

ESP research can inform ILP researchers about the way that second language learners use pragmatic functions in the real world. However, Tarone cautions against leaning too much towards an NS versus NNS distinction here, as it tends to be overemphasized; instead, the expert versus novice paradigm is better served to inform the ESP framework. Finally, Tara Leigh Gibbs, in the following chapter, *Using Moves in the Opening Sequence to Identify Callers in Institutional Settings*, takes into consideration NNS hotel housekeeping trainees' successes and failures in learning how to perform specific genres of calls known as "call-ins" to request pick-ups of items or furniture in hotel rooms. Gibbs exposes how such genres have their own conventions, which would need to be effectively taught to novices.

The information obtained from studies like these can benefit those who would like to practically apply such findings in a pedagogical context, particularly for L2 speakers who are novices in such settings. The studies here provide a wide range of approaches to studying institutional discourse reinforcing the message that multivariate approaches lend themselves to more rich, varied, and interesting data. The challenge is, however, to get permission to conduct the research. Several guidelines are listed in the Practical Considerations section, and Bardovi-Harlig and Hartford avoid sounding overly optimistic by practically addressing issues surrounding gaining permission to conduct such studies. To those who would emulate the book's contributors, they advise patience, persistence, and the effective use of social networks, among others, as key ways to ensure success.

Overall, this book is a valuable addition to the area of interlanguage pragmatics where it is hoped it will influence similar researchers to follow in the same path, broadening the scope of such research in the future.

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***Connecting Reading & Writing in Second Language Writing Instruction.* Alan Hirvela. Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press, 2004. xiii + 210 pp.**

Reviewed by

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Part of the Michigan Series on Teaching Multilingual Writers, this book addresses an issue which deserves greater recognition: the complementary nature of reading and writing in language learning. Many instructors, lacking insight into how these two skills relate, teach them piecemeal. The goal of the book is to address this unnecessary division so that teachers and their students realize the benefits of aligning reading and writing activities.

The book resembles others in the series in terms of length and structure. Each of the five chapters is divided into numerous subtopics and each concludes with a set of Questions for Reflection and Discussion. The first chapter, *Overview of Reading-Writing Connections*, recounts how researchers have come to recognize the essential link between reading and writing and how they have worked to bridge the gap that has existed historically between the teaching of the two. The least interesting of the chapters, it reads like a dry series of book reviews accompanied by laundry lists of bullet points and clusters of references to associated research. While there is a certain logic to beginning with relevant background material, this initial chapter could discourage the reader from plowing forward to more compelling material.

Fortunately, after the first chapter, the book begins to fulfill the promise of its title by incorporating pragmatic concerns into the discussion. Chapter 2 presents reader-response theory, according to which meaning does not lie buried in the text like a fossil waiting to be unearthed: it is composed by the reader through interaction with the text. Reader-response theory frees the reader from the burden of deciphering the author's *intended* meaning. Because their voice has a status equal to or superior to that of the text, readers (L2 learners in particular) can focus on developing their own insights instead of worrying whether they have understood the text in the *right* way. A further benefit of reader-response theory is that it recasts reading as an active, productive process instead of the passive, receptive one that it

has long been presented as in language classrooms.

Chapter 3 and 4 examine, respectively, writing as an avenue to reading and vice versa. A teacher of limited experience with writing pedagogy would find Chapters 3 and 4 especially valuable. The author advocates injecting writing into the reading classroom, and reading into the writing classroom, on the premise that practice in one skill generally leads to proficiency gains in the other. For example, texts for reading classes can serve as models for writing assignments. Furthermore, problems manifested in one skill may have roots in the other (e.g., a student's apparent writing difficulties may in fact be the consequence of reading struggles). Teachers can address such weakness via the complementary skill. As Hirvela explains, "Writing before, during, or after reading enables a reader to make sense of her or his reading, which in turn strengthens the quality of the reading and contributes to the development of L2 reading skills" (pp. 73-4).

With emphasis on classroom application, Chapter 5 describes five different models of reading-writing pedagogy (computer-mediated, literature/response-based, collaborative, content-based, and sequential) and discusses choosing texts and tasks for each. Inclusion of the computer-mediated model underscores one of the book's key points: reading and writing can no longer be considered solely in terms of the conventional printed page. The growing use of computers by students inside and outside the classroom means that teachers must consider the ramifications of "electronic literacy" (p. 142). As for the other four models, their concepts will be familiar to veteran teachers, who should read with an eye toward synthesizing from all five models the features relevant to their classrooms.

One flaw needs mentioning: as the book progresses, the writing becomes marred by an increasing wordiness. The careful wording of the introduction and first chapter gives way to rambling prose that makes straightforward ideas needlessly tangled. The final chapter is rife with phrasing that could be trimmed without sacrificing clarity. Though wordiness is not out of character for academic texts, it is ironic that a book on reading and writing pedagogy should fall short as a model of concise prose.

This drawback aside, the work has value: the author offers compelling evidence for linking reading and writing and makes good suggestions for classroom activities. The book's ideal readership would be experienced teachers seeking a broader perspective on reading and writing.

CALL Research Perspectives. Joy L. Egbert and Gina Mikel Petrie (Eds.). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2005. xi + 204 pp.

Reviewed by

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Egbert and Petrie have edited a comprehensive and concise text which provides a review of the most pertinent research methods and their interpretation by experts in the field of Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL).

CALL Research Perspectives is invaluable for researchers from all fields, for as many of the contributors assert, research is no longer the dominion of one theoretical framework. Rather it is the symbiosis of many in order to illuminate the complex aspect of language learning and skills development, as well as the effect of intrapersonal variables, and the sociocultural, economical, political, and historical forces which create the world as we perceive it both physically and virtually.

CALL Research Perspectives is organized into three sections: an introduction, the research perspectives, and a conclusion. The introduction offers an overview of CALL research, which Egbert still finds lacking a "coherent understanding" (p. 3). Therefore Egbert proposes a definition of CALL which places at its center language learning. She concludes that no matter who undertakes research, the methodology must be rigorous. Next, an article by Huh and Hu suggests how research rigor can be achieved. To set a criterion for research they review a wide range of articles and research to highlight the weaknesses of previous research and to emphasize that research should have strong theoretical support based on valid objectives and research design.

The main part of the book, *Research Perspectives*, is a collection of articles from leading CALL researchers. Meskill opens this section by explaining that metaphors can help define how we observe and describe what we understand as we establish perspectives of CALL. Warschauer examines the relationship between a sociocultural perspective and CALL from the point of view of the Vygotskian "concept of *mediation*" (p. 41). Many researchers will be familiar with the Zone of Proximal Development

(ZPD), but fewer are aware of the concept of mediation. The concept is equally important for as Warschauer explains, CALL is not simply about the technological contribution towards language learning; it must also be concerned with how learners and technology interact in order to bring about learning development. Investigating *interactionist SLA theory* and its contribution to language acquisition through and around technology and communities of learners, Chapelle reflects on the meaning of interaction by questioning how authentic communication fits within CALL and SLA.

Hauck reviews research on the concepts of *metacognitive knowledge and metacognitive strategies*. Referring to Flavell, Wenden, and other prominent authors on the issue of metacognition, Hauck details how these metacognitive elements assist language learners to develop an understanding of their capabilities and the learning process. Mohan and Luo explain how *Systemic Functional Linguistics* examines learners' use of the target language to construct and infer meaning from everyday communication. Due to the extent to which computers are now being used to construct all aspects of communication, Systemic Functional Linguistics is one approach that is helpful in examining how CALL and learner discourse objectives intertwine.

Commenting on *visuality*, Petrie observes that learners have come to develop skills to create a variety of visually enhanced documents. Petrie comments that visuality can be both a complement and a distractor during language learning acquisition. Yet such an approach can bring students to a deeper understanding of the semantic and semiotic features of communication.

Researching *authentic language* in Computer-Mediated Communication can be problematic, according to Crystal (2001). Nonetheless, Lotherington comments that due to constant online social lexical evolution, chat-based learning requires further investigation—notably in the area of language authenticity. Jackson and Delehanty's (1996) coaching guide to bringing the Chicago Bulls to multiple wins has defined the terms *zone* and *flow*. Egbert applies the *flow* metaphor to suggest that the right mix of tasks, skills, psychological states, and language objectives can bring learners to immerse themselves in the act of learning for the joy of learning. Very little research investigates flow, and Egbert's contribution shows how flow data collection is not such an easy task.

Considering culture, Brander posits, is vital when considering CALL and online education. Not only do students have a right to protect their

own culture from external bias structures; they also have a right to understand how to build bridges between their conceptualization and experiences with cultural identities. Yang explains how *Situated Learning* (Lave & Wenger, 1990) can be integrated into a CALL environment. Whether it is in the class or on the net, students become part of communities from which “learning takes place as an act of membership” (p. 159). Yutdhana informs readers that *Design-Based Research* (DBR) first emerged as a concept in 2002, when Hoadley “describe[d] work combining software design and research in education” (p. 170). Yutdhana provides some examples to demonstrate that researchers can benefit from DBR, because as a research method it analyzes the effect of designing learning environments on developing learning theories. This contribution concludes that although DBR can lead researchers to develop “richer” understandings of CALL environments, DBR does need consistent, long-term investment in order to bear results (p. 176).

As the last contributor to the research perspective section, Raby begins her review of *User-Centered Ergonomic Approach to CALL Research* with an anecdotal observation of one of her students who had decided to use a piece of grammar-learning software to develop her idiomatic comprehension level. Ergonomics aims to evaluate the reasons subjects act and perform the way they do during their working activities (p. 180). This is a novel angle from which to observe student behavior as it places CALL in the position of a working environment rather than a learning milieu. Raby concludes that by positioning CALL as a working environment researchers might need a variety of theories to observe “learning and teaching not only as performance but also as psychological and social processes [which] call for many dimensions to be taken into account” (p. 187).

In the conclusion Petrie observes that *CALL Research Perspective* is not intended to be “a comprehensive atlas. Rather . . . [it] is a developing map” from which to establish working paths in the CALL field (p. 194). Vygotsky’s sociocultural theory is the common thread which ties the contributions together. That is to say, the contributors provide some evidence that students have much to gain from computer-based activities, which encourage them to autonomously investigate their language and technological abilities. Thus each contribution not only reviews CALL research in depth, but also offers invaluable future directions towards creating learning environments that are more conducive to student-centered learning activities. In addition, *CALL Research Perspectives’* consistent format makes it an accessible read for both novice and advanced researchers interested in research methodology and CALL.

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***The Greek & Latin Roots of English*. 3rd ed. Tamara M. Green. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003. xvi + 235 pp.**

Reviewed by

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As the preface to this book informs us, more than 60% of all English words are derived from Latin and Greek. The number rises to 90% in the areas of science and technology. The study of Graeco-Latin roots is as valuable to science majors as to English majors, be they native speakers or foreign language learners, and is an interesting and time-efficient way to enlarge one's vocabulary across a wide range of disciplines.

The Greek and Latin Roots of English was originally written as class material by Tamara Green, professor and chair of the Classics Department at CUNY-Hunter College, for a course on Latin-Greek etymology offered jointly to mainstream classics majors and advanced ESL students. Green's resulting text is a fascinating and highly readable account of the linguistic origins of many English words. The reader does not need a background in Latin-Greek studies, but this certainly would be an advantage.

The 18-chapter text is presented thematically with separate units on the structure of the Latin and Greek languages followed by sections on professional disciplines including politics, medicine, and literature, and concluding with information on the history and cultures of Greece and

Rome, as well as Latin expressions still used in English. Except for a short, introductory lesson on food, most chapters include an extended reading and a word bank containing Latin and Greek words, their English meanings, and one example for each of a derived word in English. Exercises follow giving cumulative practice with additional words derived from these roots. Rather than presenting Greek and Latin roots in separate sections or one by one with long lists of derived words, Green deliberately chose this integrated, topical approach to preserve a sense of the richness and complexity of the English language, which has absorbed so many words of foreign origin. The text ends with separate appendices of the Latin and Greek words appearing within the chapters. A teacher's manual is also available.

Native speakers interested in etymology will find this book a feast for the intellect. It is packed full of interesting facts. For example, few readers will know that the word *ketchup* comes from Chinese. Native readers will delight in discovering the Latin and Greek origins of a profusion of familiar and unfamiliar words, particularly those coming from Latin through French. Thought-provoking chapters on the linguistic structure of Latin and Greek deserve several readings. This is a book to be read through once for basic understanding and then kept to be used regularly as a reference work.

The very thing which makes this book intriguing to native speakers, however, may discourage its use with the EFL students we have in Japan. The presentation of roots with single-word English examples is not meant for readers with a small number of Graeco-Latin-derived words in their repertoires. The book's complex thematic presentation would surely frustrate many students who are accustomed to memorizing long lists of words for short-term recall on tests. Finally, the explanations of Latin and Greek structure are written for learners having extensive experience with grammar study in English-speaking countries.

The above caveats, however, should in no way dissuade native English teachers from reading this book. With the current shift in Japanese universities away from English conversation classes and toward content courses, academic reading, and TOEFL study, it behooves college-level EFL instructors to broaden their understanding of Graeco-Latin etymology so that they can confidently impart this knowledge to their students and help expand their vocabularies. This book is a great place to start.

***An Introduction to Psycholinguistics (2nd Edition).* Danny D. Steinberg & Natalia V. Sciarini. 2006. Harlow, UK: Pearson Longman. xvii + pp. 306.**

Reviewed by

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Psycholinguistics is a difficult field of study because of its continuous development due to ongoing research. Often the terminology is rather incomprehensible to nonspecialists, so some linguistics students and even teachers may lack the knowledge to understand its different branches. That is why books called introductory need to be accessible to novice readers. They should contain a comprehensive updated bibliography and, whenever possible, an ample glossary. *An Introduction to Psycholinguistics* has accomplished the first two, but lacks the glossary, which is a drawback. This is a book that offers a simple and complete approach to different aspects of the relationships between psycholinguistics and first and second language learning (acquisition).

The book has three main parts: a) first language learning, b) second language learning, and c) "language, mind, and brain" which is centred on aspects of culture, natural grammar, and the function of thought and the brain in language development. The writers have succeeded in simplifying the language and ideas presented throughout the book so that they are accessible to all readers regardless of their previous knowledge of the topics.

There are, however, three challenging assumptions in the preface that may be difficult to achieve or may lead to the wrong impression that they are mainstream views in the field. The first is the idea that this volume can "bring the reader to the highest level of understanding of the topics" (p. xiii). Because of the positive simplicity of this introductory book, it may be difficult to reach a high level of understanding of controversial and highly specialized topics. The second assumption is the labelling of Natural Grammar as "a new theory of grammar." Discussing in detail whether Natural Grammar is new is beyond the scope of this review; however, it is partially assumed in older theories, some of which were formulated by Krashen 30 years ago, or introduced in the "natural speech"

methods (Direct Method or Total Physical Response) (p. 150) even longer ago. The last interesting assumption that teaching methodologies should focus on learners may be hard to achieve as teachers have their own ways of thinking and doing, and it is difficult for them to change their style, beliefs, and attitudes. However, it is in the teachers' interest to try to change and be open and flexible in their daily work by listening more to their students' needs than to their own ideas.

One innovative section focuses on the mental processes that lead to communication (understanding and expression) in sign language. Even the most nonspecialized psycholinguistics books fail to include this because it is quite a controversial topic and specialists tend to believe it is not of much use to the general public.

I also found it very useful for the JALT readership that special attention was paid to Japanese and Chinese research in the teaching and acquisition of kana and kanji in writing, speaking, and even psycholinguistic disorders like aphasia.

Overall, Steinberg and Sciarini have accomplished a brief but informative book which should have a significant place in the field of psycholinguistics, especially in Asia. Readers will find *An Introduction to Psycholinguistics* informative, reader friendly, and more than anything else, useful and well balanced.