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Editorial

Discourse Based Perspectives on Second Language Acquisition

All the research in this volume is "discourse based" in that it views language not only as words and a system of grammatical rules mastered in isolation, but as a set of practices used in interaction. The research here explores those practices by close examination of spoken discourse and builds on the assumption that words and an entire language attain their meaning through the ways in which they are used, and the tasks they are meant to accomplish. These are ideas which are not new to the field of linguistic anthropology, where culture and communication are seen as intimately connected (cf. Duranti, 1994), or conversation analysis, which views conversational practices as the infrastructure of human sociality (Sacks, Schegloff, & Jefferson, 1974); Not surprisingly, much of the work in this volume is guided by conversation analytic and linguistic anthropological approaches.

The article by Marianne Celce-Murcia, Zoltán Dörnyei and Sarah Thurrell builds explicitly on Dell Hymes' (1974) notion of "communicative competence" expanding his model to provide a new perspective on second language learning. The resulting multi-leveled theoretical framework suggests rich areas of exploration for second language acquisition research; some examples of such research comprise the rest of this volume.

A discourse-based perspective on second language acquisition reveals that even in the classroom, students learn not only the language and its grammar, but certain kinds of interactional patterns that go with that language. Joan Kelly Hall's discourse analysis in a Spanish foreign language classroom examines the notion of "interactive competence." Her article suggests that, over the course of time, while language skills grow, interactive skills in this particular classroom are actually hindered by the way in which discourse patterns develop in classroom talk. In a similar vein, Numa Markee examines classroom discourse patterns in an ESL class and reveals the classroom-specific, teacher centered nature of question and answer patterns that develop even when students are engaged in "group work." Markee applies conversational analytic methods to L2 classroom discourse, to show how (as Mehan (1979) has for L1 classrooms) L2 teachers and their students orient to the social organization of the classroom, and not to that of natural conversation. As both Markee and Hall reveal, if second language students' only exposure to a second language occurs in the language

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classroom, the interactional patterns they learn in the acquisition process may not serve them well in other situations.

The last two articles in this volume focus on how interactional patterns are embedded in larger activities which influence second language acquisition. Amy Snyder Ohta's research in a Japanese foreign language classroom reveals how two students of different levels of linguistic competence aid each other when they work together because the activities they engage in provide an opportunity to use the language for authentic communicative purposes. Peter Coughlan's article examines opportunities for language learning which occur *outside* of the classroom, looking in particular, at phone conversations in Portuguese and English between a young boy and his grandmother. By using the telephone activity as a means to trace the young boy's acquisition of Portuguese and his subsequent loss of this language, Coughlan illustrates how sociocultural factors are crucially tied to bilingualism.

Issues of sociocultural factors and second language acquisition are developed more broadly in Coughlan's interview with James Lantolf. In addition, the book reviews in this volume reflect current interest in language, interaction, and sociocultural factors involved in language acquisition, both in and outside the classroom.

The articles, interview, and book reviews here take a broad sweep across both discourse analysis and second language acquisition research. They are, I believe, the beginning of a more inter-disciplinary approach to second language acquisition which recognizes that language is crucially tied to interaction and culture. In their book, *In Other Words*, Ellen Bialystok and Kenji Hakuta emphasize this need for a recognition of sociocultural factors in second language acquisition research and suggest that "...the sociocultural approach is best regarded as an idea whose time has come, but which requires new methodological canons to be invented" (1994, p. 190). The discourse based perspectives represented in this volume indicate that such canons are in the process of being invented and transforming the shape of second language acquisition research.

Betsy Rymes **December, 1995**

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