



Book Review: Second Language Learning Theories (4th ed.) from the Perspective of Graduate Students in Tay Ninh Province, Vietnam

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ABSTRACT

Second Language Acquisition (SLA) has many different theories. This manuscript brings the revision of the book titled Second Language Learning Theories (2019), on the perspective of a group of graduate students, joining in Master program in English Studies, at a university based in Tay Ninh, Vietnam, focusing on the field of Second Language Learning (SLL). The textbook itself and the chapters, strengths and weaknesses, taken from the book, are analysed in this paper. All viewpoints within this paper are based on the original textbook, examples or opinions taken directly from the authors. We ourselves value the knowledge of the original textbook in both perspectives, as graduate students, and as researchers. Last but not least, this may concerned as the review as well as the reference for further research.

Keywords: Second Language Learning, Second Language Acquisition, English Studies, Vietnam

CONTENT SUMMARY

In this fourth edition, published 2019, the book is divided into ten chapters, and each of them has its own values and focuses.

Chapter 1 “Second Language Learning: Key Concepts and Issues”, provides the overview of main concepts and problems used in the entire book. The theory is explained, and also other terms, such as Second Language Learning (SLL), and for example, a model which is widely used in SLL. Then comes the nature of language, which is the origin of a language and its details, and the process of language learning. Next one is the views of the learners of the language, and the last one is the social practice connection, on the side of SLL. Chapter 2 “The Recent History of Second Language Learning Research”, gives the look back of the origin of the theory in the 1950s and 1960s, including Behaviourism, Behaviourism under Attack, the theory in the 1970s timestamp, and in 1980s - which is a turning point, the Continuities and New Themes in the Research Agenda, and the time line of SLL.

Chapter 3 “Linguistics and Language Learning: The Universal Grammar Approach”, Chapter 4 “Cognitive Approaches to Second Language Learning (1): General Learning Mechanism” and Chapter 5 “Cognitive Approaches to Second Language Learning (2): Memory Systems, Explicit Knowledge and Skill Learning”, are three chapters mentioning about the approaches, first Chapter 3 provides the definition of grammar approach, the factors included and evaluation, then comes Chapter 4 goes with the general learning mechanisms, then comes further details including the systems, knowledge and skill learning, which belong to Chapter 5. Chapter 6 “Interaction in Second Language Learning” is about the interaction in SLL, mentioning about the hypothesis, theory and related ones. In this chapter, the revision of the Interaction Hypothesis mentioned, also the



negotiation, target learning L2, feedbacks' values. In addition, "Noticing" problem plays a concern within this chapter. Later on, the evaluation is the last one, combining with other factors.

Chapter 7 "Meaning-Based Perspectives on Second Language Learning" is the study about SLL, which captures the early functionalist studies of SLL, the analysis ones, and later ones. In this chapter, a case study about an approach is included. This chapter gives clear, detailed information about how SLL works, the development of SLL and related approaches or functions, and hypotheses, provided with figures, tables or explanations. Chapter 8 "Sociocultural Perspectives on Second Language Learning" attentionally focused on the language learning (LL) in social terms. This chapter takes the Vygotsky's work as a base knowledge to do the analysis about a specific strand. The parts such as Sociocultural Theory, Application of SC to SLL, and others are named.

Chapter 9 "Sociolinguistic Perspectives" reviews the aspects of sociolinguistics-SLL Theory relationship. In general, Sociolinguistics is the study of language in use, containing a lot of theoretical perspectives. The strands mentioned earlier are put in the contemporary sociolinguistics and anthropological linguistics, in order to learn about the second language (L2) learning (SLL). Chapter 10 "Integrating Theoretical Perspectives on Second Language Learning", the final chapter, explore the perspectives of theoretical integration on SLL, after the factors such as theoretical perspectives, multivoiced reflection, and yet the contradictory nature of L2, clarified. In this part, the integration is named, put in analysis and then gives more information about the frameworks, their details, and theories and applications.

This book provides a comprehensive discussion for the learners, educators, researchers in terms of the field of SLA. Wrapping up the contents with the theory selections, openings for achievements and directions in SLL research area and also challenges for further research.

STRENGTHS

This book is a wide range of knowledge not only about Second Language Learning (SLL), but also gives clear details, explanations for focused targets, the leading experts in Second Language Acquisition (SLA) area of research. All of the theoretical perspectives covering the SLA term are included in this book, with clear scope for each Chapter in separate view. More over, the updates and specialist features are enclosed within the book. We - the authors, respect the values of this book put in practice, especially in the course-based subject that we just learned recently. This plays the main crucial reason why we choose to do this research, we want to put in practice and show the meaning that SLL theories are valuable in theory aspect, yet in practical use, focusing on the use in the schooling of a Master program in English Studies at a university in Tay Ninh province, Vietnam as a narrow scoping.

WEAKNESSES

While the book maps the SLA field well, our main limitation as graduate students is the difficulty in applying its theories to our actual teaching or research. This is not because the lack of information or the capabilities of learning, but the nature of the subject itself. Testing complex ideas like Universal Grammar or MOGUL requires methodological skills and research infrastructure we simply do not have yet; we are still learning to design basic empirical studies. The time on researching is also a difficulty we face while approaching to this book of SLL theories.

CONCLUSION

Second Language Learning Theories (4th Ed.) successfully delivers on its promise to provide a broad, pluralist, and up-to-date overview of the SLA field. For graduate students in a specific context, it is an indispensable "map" that provides the theoretical vocabulary and critical frameworks necessary to navigate academic research and design a thesis. Last but not least, we value the enjoyable read although we would like to see if the theories are practiced in the contexts of universities located in Tay Ninh, Vietnam or not.



REFERENCE

1. Mitchell, R., Myles, F., & Marsden, E. (2019). *Second language learning theories* (Fourth edition). Routledge.