



Readings in Second Language Acquisition

Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego



Katowice 2012

READINGS
IN SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION



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Edited by Danuta Gabryś-Barker

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INTRODUCTION

The present volume offers an overview of selected topics which relate directly to second (foreign) language acquisition and learning. Our main focus is on the context in which English is acquired by means of formal instruction. Although the authors of the individual chapters are all specialists in the area of second language research working in Polish higher education, each chapter offers an overview of research carried out in a wider context. These studies report on well-known research and the seminal work done in the field, as well as more up-to-date projects, in some cases carried out by the authors themselves. All the authors are research workers and lecturers at the University of Silesia, Institute of English. Many of them are well-established scholars in second language acquisition research.

The volume therefore consists of nine chapters, each of which discusses both theoretical and empirical findings in a given area of study. It starts with a chapter comparing the processes involved in second language acquisition and foreign language learning, which then investigates the most influential theory on the topic and lays the foundation for further consideration of specific areas of language acquisition discussed in individual chapters (Chapter 1). The chapters that follow discuss not only the development of different language subsystems as they occur at different learning stages – lexical, syntactic and phonological development in a second language (Chapter 2, 3 and 4) – but they also look at pragmatic issues and language communication (Chapter 5 and 6). One chapter specifically relates to the role of the mother tongue in language learning and production, by reviewing the issues of code-switching, language transfer and attrition (Chapter 7). The last two chapters look at important factors in language learning which result from individual learner differences, namely individual affectivity and gender (Chapter 8 and 9). The present volume is by no means exhaustive and essentially purports only to offer a set of selected readings, as a supplementary resource in support of the main course-books. To be otherwise

Introduction

would entail the discussion at length of many issues, such as for example age factor. Instead, in this volume, age appears as a variable discussed in respect of every dimension of language learning presented in individual chapters.

In this book the terms “second language” and “acquisition” constitute umbrella terms for the two contexts: the natural acquiring of a second language and formal instruction (learning) of a foreign language. However, it will become clear when reading the chapters that the overwhelming concern of the authors is directed towards formal instruction and foreign language learning, as it is central to the intended purpose of this volume. It is hoped that the presentation of theoretical issues and discussion of research in SLA will be of assistance to teachers and students engaged with second language acquisition courses and other related disciplines, such as theory of teaching and learning as well as methodology of teaching English as a foreign language.

Danuta Gabryś-Barker
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