# Muriel Saville-Troike & Karen Barto: Introducing second language acquisition (3ʳᵈ Edition)

(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 2016. 217 p.)

It has been a constant interest of psycholinguists to compare and contrast how people acquire their first language (L1) and learn their second language (L2). There have been debates on this issue among scholars using theoretical models such as Behaviorist, Innatist and Interactionist to understand the phenomena of L1 acquisition and L2 learning. Behaviorism, which gave birth to stimulus-response (S-R) theory, describes L2 learning as the acquisition of a set of structures through habit formation. This theory is counterattacked by Chomsky (1976) with his concept of Universal Grammar (UG) stating that the human race is equipped with Language Acquisition Device (LAD) as a tool to learn languages, which implies that the input from the environment itself is not sufficient for the success of L2 learning, however, there is a processor in language learners' mind which contains language (Mitchel & Myles, 2004). On the other hand, interactionists such as Long (1985), believe that language development is the result of a complex interaction between the unique capacities of L2 learners and their environment. More recently, based on the interactionist theory, social constructionism is related to Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural perspective on language learning. Constructionism is particularly useful when discussing sociocultural theory based on the two themes proposed by Wertsch (1991) that are individual development and human action.

Understanding the basic theories of SLA as mentioned above is vital for students interested in this field and Introducing Second Language Acquisition has been one of the major references in the field of Second Language Acquisition (SLA). Currently in its third edition, the book offers a concise yet comprehensive overview to the foundations of the field. While Muriel Saville-Troike acts as the sole author in the previous two editions, the current edition is written in cooperation with Karen Barto as her co-author. Still, with the same scope, perspective and design, the current edition demonstrates several major changes in its content and references, especially in terms of how the theoretical perspectives could be relevant for instructional strategies and conditions. There are seven chapters in this book and, similar to its predecessors, each chapter centres on three basic questions: What exactly does the second language learner come to know? How does the learner acquire this knowledge? Why are some learners more successful than others?

Saville-Troike and Barto begins the book by defining the very basic terms as well as introducing the foundational concepts in SLA in the first chapter. They draw the distinction between the different types of second language and exemplify them exquisitely. The chapter also discusses and emphasizes how the field of linguistics

and psychology are related to SLA in relation to the questions mentioned earlier; what to know, how to acquire, and why there are differences among language learners. The following chapter discusses the prevalence of multilingualism in the world. It also provides readers with basic comparisons and contrasts between the notion of first language and second language acquisition in three different states; initial, intermediate, and final which is also visualized in a practical compare-contrast matrix. The logical problem in language learning and a preview of the different theoretical frameworks of SLA conclude the chapter as the basis to help readers go through the following chapters in the book.

The next three chapters offer balanced interdisciplinary exposition of the linguistic, psychological, and social perspectives of SLA. The linguistics of SLA emphasizes the nature of language, which is then followed by a historical overview of the early approaches to SLA such as Contrastive Analysis, Error Analysis, and Interlanguage. Saville-Troike and Barto also highlight the notion of Chomsky's Universal Grammar before concluding this chapter by presenting the more recent functional approaches. The psychological perspective of SLA focuses mainly on language and brain, learning processes, and learner differences. This part gives interesting insight into studies exploring what happens in the brain when one is learning a language and which parts of the brain are responsible for language learning. It also elaborates several frameworks focusing on learning processes: Information Processing, Connectionism, and Complexity Theory. The following discussion in the psychological perspective focuses on differences in language learners in terms of age, sex, aptitude, motivation, personality, and learning strategies and how the differences affect the process of second language learning. The effects of multilingualism are also discussed at the end of this part emphasizing the positive effects of multilingualism on intellectual functions. The fifth chapter, which talks about the social context of SLA, is also developed from the three questions mentioned earlier in this review. Attention is given mainly on the microsocial and the macrosocial levels that affect language learning. The microsocial focus raises the issue of the potential effects of different environments which influence the language learning process directly, while the macrosocial focus deals with broader cultural, political, and educational circumstances in relation to SLA.

In the following chapter, the authors integrate the aspects of SLA from the linguistic, psycholinguistic, and sociolinguistic perspectives discussed previously and reflect on the acquisition of communicative competence. Here, they provide a comprehensive discussion of the components of language knowledge required for second language use with sufficient examples given in each case. Finally, they dedicate the last chapter to the review of the answers to their three fundamental

questions. In this chapter, they discuss the notion of "near-native" competence, what linguistic features are commonly mastered last, and how individual and social goals affect ultimate attainment. The chapter closes with the implications of the findings in the field of SLA.

Each chapter begins with a chapter preview, which allows the readers to form expectations related to the upcoming chapter, and furthermore, ends with a "Questions for Self Study" activity, which is very useful for self-reflection or for classroom discussions. This makes the book a valuable resource for university professors to run engaging introductory SLA courses also with the support of additional online supplementary material. The simple language and logical exposition make the book easy to understand even for readers with little or no prior knowledge in linguistics. Although commonly promoted as a textbook for undergraduate students, this book could definitely be used by graduate students who are new to the field. It can also be a practical guide for second language learners and teachers interested in understanding second language learning phenomena. Through this book, Saville-Troike and Barto provide a solid and comprehensive foundation in SLA which makes this book a masterpiece in the field.

## References

**Chomsky, N.** (1976). *Reflections on language.* New York, NY: Pantheon.

**Long, M. H.** (1985). Input and second language acquisition theory. *Input in second language acquisition,* 377-393.

**Mitchel, R.,** & Myles, F. (2004). *Second language learning theories (2$^{nd}$ ed).* London, UK: Arnold

**Vygotsky, L.** (1978). Interaction between learning and development. *Readings on the development of children,* 23(3), 34-41.

**Wertsch, J. V., & Wertsch, J. V**. (2009). *Voices of the mind: Sociocultural approach to mediated action.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

**Saville-Troike, M. & Barto, K.** (2016). *Introducing second language acquisition (3rd Edition).* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

FEISAL AZIEZ
Universitas Muhammadiyah Purwokerto
feisalaziez@ump.ac.id
PhD Student
University of Pannonia
feiaziez@gmail.com