



Project
MUSE[®]

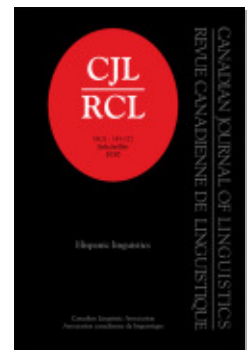
Today's Research. Tomorrow's Inspiration.

Handbook of Cognitive Linguistics and second language acquisition

Engin Arik

The Canadian Journal of Linguistics / La revue canadienne de linguistique, 55(3), November/novembre 2010, pp. 425-427 (Article)

Published by University of Toronto Press



 For additional information about this article

<http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/cjl/summary/v055/55.3.arik.html>

Reviews *Comptes rendus*

Peter Robinson and Nick C. Ellis, eds. 2008. *Handbook of Cognitive Linguistics and second language acquisition*. New York/London: Routledge. Pp. x + 566. US\$69.95 (softcover).

Reviewed by Engin Arik, *Okan University*

Cognitive Linguistics is a rapidly growing and relatively new approach to the study of language and its relation to cognition. It encompasses a variety of theories such as Cognitive Grammar, Construction Grammar, Radical Construction Grammar, and usage-based theories of grammar, among others. It challenges mainstream linguistic theory (Chomskyan Generative Grammar) and deals with not only traditional linguistic fields such as syntax, semantics, and phonology but also subfields of linguistics from acquisition to typology. The present book provides a cognitive linguistic approach to yet another subfield of linguistics, second language acquisition. This book consists of three parts with 19 individual papers including an introduction and conclusion, followed by author and subject indices.

In Part I, in “An introduction to Cognitive Linguistics, second language acquisition, and language instruction” (pp. 3–24), Nick C. Ellis and Peter Robinson overview Cognitive Linguistics in general and give the goals of the book: to summarize cognitive linguistic perspectives on language, language use, and child language acquisition and the development of a Cognitive Linguistics of second language acquisition and second language pedagogy. They also summarize the chapters in the present book.

Part II comprises nine articles devoted to present cognitive linguistic approaches to the study of language and cognition. In “Aspects of attention in language” (pp. 27–38), Leonard Talmy investigates the effects of attention or salience on language. He argues that the linguistic expression, content, and context of the expression have differing degrees of attention. He shows that linguistic factors (morphological, phonological, and syntactic factors, properties of the referent and the referent’s relation to its representation, and properties of temporal progression) affect attention in language. Although these factors are universal, the extensiveness of some factors differs across languages and between first and second language acquisition. In “Prototypes in Cognitive Linguistics” (pp. 39–65), John R. Taylor explores the effects of studies on prototypes and categorization on the emergence of Cognitive Linguistics. He also shows these effects on studies of lexical semantics, phonology, syntax, and constructions.

In “Cognitive Grammar as a basis for language instruction” (pp. 66–88), Ronald W. Langacker argues that, compared to other theories of grammar, his theory of Cognitive Grammar can offer a more promising ground for language pedagogy. This is because Cognitive Grammar focuses on meaning: Cognitive Grammar proposes meaningfulness of grammar such that every grammatical category (noun, verb, subject, object, and so on) can be semantically characterized. Also, Cognitive Grammar is usage-based, and thus focuses on the actual learning process. In “Word Grammar, Cognitive Linguistics, and second language learning and teaching” (pp. 89–113), Richard Hudson introduces his theory of Word Grammar and its relation to

second language acquisition and language pedagogy. He argues that, like memory, language (vocabulary and grammar) is a network. The language network can be learnable and teachable through generalization, induction, motivation, and attention.

In "Spatial language learning and the functional geometric framework" (pp. 114–138), Kenny R. Coventry and Pedro Guijarro-Fuentes examine spatial language, in which languages differ from each other quite unexpectedly. Their theory of a functional geometric framework that can account for this diversity considers three types of information in construing spatial language: geometric relations, dynamic-kinematic routines, and context, which are already available in prelinguistic infants. Comparing English and Spanish, the authors argue that these three types of information also interact during second language acquisition. In "Language without grammar" (pp. 139–167), William O'Grady argues that syntactic mechanisms are identical to the language processing mechanism, left-to-right in real time. From this perspective, he then examines phrase structure, pronoun interpretation, agreement, inversion, and first and second language acquisition by focusing on English. In "Children's first language acquisition from a usage-based perspective" (pp. 168–196), Elena Lieven and Michael Tomasello examine first language acquisition and argue that children learn their first language from particular utterances in particular contexts, indicating that frequency, consistency, and complexity of linguistic forms affect language learning. The authors support their claims by reviewing works on morphological development, the development of the transitive construction, and the development of more complex sentences in English. In "Construction learning and second language acquisition" (pp. 197–215), Adele E. Goldberg and Devin Casenhiser present a Construction Grammar analysis of learning new constructions, form-meaning pairings that are learned on the basis of input, in child and adult speakers of English. They show that child and adult speakers can learn new constructions on the basis of very minimal training. They further demonstrate that skewed input (exposure to input in differing frequencies) affects learning. For instance, participants learn high frequency words faster than those with low frequency. In "Usage-based grammar and second language acquisition" (pp. 216–236), Joan Bybee examines the effects of usage frequency on construction learning and its consequences for second language acquisition. The author argues that language grammar is a continuum of categories and constructions in differing frequencies.

Part III presents nine articles and focuses on Cognitive Linguistics and second language acquisition. In "Learning to talk about motion in a foreign language" (pp. 239–275), Teresa Cadierno examines motion event descriptions in first and second language following Talmy's typology based on whether the language encodes path information in the main verb (i.e., a verb-framed language such as Spanish) or in a particle (i.e., a satellite-framed language such as English) as well as Slobin's notion of thinking for speaking. In "Gestures and second language acquisition" (pp. 276–305), Marianne Gullberg focuses on gestures in first language acquisition and explores co-speech gestural production in second language learners. She convincingly argues that studying gestures provides novel ways to investigate communicative, cognitive, and process-related constraints on second language development.

In "Conceptual transfer and meaning extensions" (pp. 306–340), Terence Odlin examines the influence of language on thought especially in the domains of space, time, and motion with a focus on conceptual transfer, meaning cross-linguistic influence involving relativistic effects, and second language acquisition. In "A unified model" (pp. 341–371), Brian MacWhinney proposes a processing model to account for both first and second language acquisition because, he argues, first and second language acquisition share the same goals and the same structures, processes, and learning mechanisms.

In “Usage-based and form-focused language acquisition: The associative learning of constructions, learned attention, and the limited L2 endstate” (pp. 372–405), Nick C. Ellis focuses on aspects of associative learning, such as frequency, contingency, competition between multiple cues, and salience, that affect first and second language acquisition. The author suggests that second language acquisition is less successful than first language acquisition because of transfer and learned attention in first language. In “Corpus-based methods in analyses of second language acquisition data” (pp. 406–431), Stefan Th. Gries argues that frequencies of occurrence of linguistic forms play a crucial role in acquisition, processing, and representation of language. These frequencies can be easily detected in corpora (representative and analyzable spoken and written texts); therefore, corpus-based approaches such as frequency lists, lexico-grammatical co-occurrences, and concordances are highly valuable in language research including second language acquisition.

In “Teaching construal: Cognitive Pedagogical Grammar” (pp. 432–455), Michel Achard presents a Cognitive Grammar approach to second language pedagogy. He provides examples from French causation/perception verbs in addition to a teaching proposal for teaching French definite and partitive articles from a Cognitive Grammar perspective. In “Cognitive Linguistics and second language instruction” (pp. 456–488), Andrea Tyler examines modal verbs in English and compares a traditional analysis and a cognitive linguistic analysis of them, arguing that the latter approach is superior to the former. The author then provides sample materials for teaching English modal verbs to non-native speakers. In “Conclusion: Cognitive Linguistics, second language acquisition and L2 instruction — issues for research” (pp. 489–545), Peter Robinson and Nick C. Ellis conclude the book and address future research questions: “Is the course of acquisition of complex constructions the same for adults and children? How do type and token frequency interact in learning second language constructions? What are the influences on language, thought, and second language development? What are the typological differences, relative difficulty, and second language transfer like between different languages?”, among others.

This well-edited collection achieves its goals: it provides not only a general overview of Cognitive Linguistics but also current cognitive linguistic approaches to second language acquisition. Although most of the authors in Part I focus mostly on their theories or models, giving less detail of their predictions about actual second language acquisition, the book is still equally valuable to both cognitive linguists and scholars working on second language acquisition and language pedagogy. Interested readers may also benefit from the chapters in Doughty and Long (2003), Achard and Niemeier (2004), Gullberg and Indefrey (2006), and Arabski and Wojtasze (2010).

REFERENCES

- Achard, Michel, and Susanne Niemeier, eds. 2004. *Cognitive Linguistics, second language acquisition, and foreign language teaching*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Arabski, Janusz, and Adam Wojtasze, eds. 2010. *Neurolinguistic and psycholinguistic perspectives on SLA*. Bristol, UK: Multilingual Matters.
- Doughty, Catherine J. and Michael H. Long, eds. 2003. *The handbook of second language acquisition*. Malden, MA: Blackwell.
- Gullberg, Marianne, and Peter Indefrey, eds. 2006. *The cognitive neuroscience of second language acquisition*. Malden, MA: Blackwell.