

Introduction

This monograph issue of the *RCEI* journal focuses on the complex research area of language acquisition. Issues relating to both L1 and L2 acquisition are addressed, although the articles on the latter predominate. The different contributions contained herein adopt different linguistic perspectives to support this own particular speciality.

The monograph is composed of six articles and an interview, all of them dealing with specific aspects involved in the field of study known as language acquisition. Thus, Dr. Montserrat Capdevila i Batet, assuming the theoretical framework of the Principles and Parameters model of Generative Theory, analyses in her “Cross-Lingual Similarities in the Acquisition of English and Catalan” the acquisition of the functional categories Agreement and Tense by monolingual English and Catalan speaking children. She argues that children go through two stages in the acquisition of these two functional categories: a prefunctional stage first, and a second functional stage later. The results of her study support the Maturation of Functional Categories Hypothesis within the research area of L1 acquisition.

Dr. Vivian J. Cook discusses in his “Monolingual Bias in Second Language Acquisition Research” to what extent L2 acquisition (SLA) research is in fact in agreement with its assertion that the learner’s language is an independent system. That is, whether there is a match between what it postulates and the actual way in which it is carried out. He revises the original assumption that L2 learners have independent grammars and contrasts it with the terminology used in this research field as well as the typical methodologies employed. In his view, the independence of the L2 user is an essential pre-condition for this research and has to be fulfilled when being undertaken, reminding us that the field of bilingualism already exhibits this coherence with its own postulates.

Dr. Sandra S. Fotos reviews the concept of task in the field of L2 learning in her contribution “Communicative Task Performance and Second Language Acquisition: Do Task Features Determine Learner Output?” She tackles its various definitions and classifications, examines the theoretical assumptions that assign importance to performing tasks while acquiring languages other than the mother tongue, and discusses the methodology for analysing task talk. She also presents a research report in which the critical effect that the design features of a particular task may have in the type of language produced by learners, in the undertaking of the task, is raised.

Dr. Kevin R. Gregg ponders on theory construction in the field of SLA, arguing, in his “UG and SLA theory: The Story So Far”, that it is the work done within the

Universal Grammar (UG) framework which has indeed striven towards a theory in this research field. However, he acknowledges that although this UG/SLA research program is seriously committed to theory construction, there are still important disagreements about fundamental theoretical claims within the program as well as central issues to be addressed. He discusses these explanatory problems yet to be tackled.

Dr. Mireia Llinàs i Grau is the other contributor to this monograph issue who deals with L1 acquisition in her article “Patterns of Verbal Complementation in the Speech of a Pre-Two-Year-Old Girl”. She also moves within the UG framework and addresses verb/complement patterns in the speech of a 20-22 month old girl. Assuming basic proposals of the Minimalist Program, she offers an account of the optionality in the position of the complement.

Dr. Merrill Swain addresses the role of collaborative dialogue in L2 learning in her “Collaborative Dialogue: Its Contribution to Second Language Learning”. She examines current views on what interaction offers to the language learning process, and considers interaction from a Vygotskian perspective. She reflects on the results of several recent studies which indicate that dialogue itself may give rise to some language learning as such, thus dialogue being a profitable unit of analysis in this enterprise.

Finally, the interview between the editor of this monograph and Dr. Vivian J. Cook reviews prominent areas within the field of SLA research, discussing the situation in this field at the moment.