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The Routledge Handbook of Second Language Acquisition

Edited by Susan M. Gass and Allison Mackey

The Routledge Handbook of Second Language Acquisition

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Susan M. Gass is University Distinguished Professor in the Department of Linguistics and Language at Michigan State University. She is the author of many titles and co-author of *Second Language Acquisition: An Introductory Course*, Third Edition (Routledge, 2008), with Larry Selinker. She co-edits the series, *Second Language Acquisition Research* (with Alison Mackey, for Routledge).

Alison Mackey is Professor in the Department of Linguistics at Georgetown University. She is the author of many titles, and co-author of *Data Elicitation for Second and Foreign Language Research* (Routledge 2007), with Susan M. Gass. She co-edits the series, *Second Language Acquisition Research* (with Susan Gass, for Routledge).

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Abbreviation

ACTFL	American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages
ADHD	attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder
AE	American English
AMTB	Attitude/Motivation Test Battery
AoA	age of arrival
ASL	American Sign Language
AV	auditory-visual
CA	Contrastive Analysis
CALL	computer-assisted language learning
CANAL-F	Cognitive Ability for Novelty in Acquisition of Language— Foreign
CATSS	Computer Adaptive Test of Size and Strength
CCSARP	Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization Project
CHL	Chinese as a heritage language
CLS	complementary learning systems
CMC	computer-mediated communication
CPH	Critical Period Hypothesis
CS	conditioned stimulus
CV	consonant-vowel
ΔP	Delta P
DCTs	discourse completion tasks
DLAB	Defense Language Aptitude Battery
EAP	English for Academic Purposes
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
ESL	English as a second language
ELAN	early left anterior negativity
ERPs	event-related potentials
ESF	European Science Foundation
ESP	English for Specific Purposes

EWM	executive working memory
FDH	fundamental difference hypothesis
FLES	foreign language in the elementary school
fMRI	functional magnetic resonance imaging
FonF	Focus on Form
FonFs	Focus on Forms
FSI/ILR	Foreign Service Institute/Interagency Language Round Table
GJTs	Grammaticality Judgment Tests
GM	grammatical metaphor
HLA	Heritage Language Acquisition
HLLs	heritage language learners
IDI	Intercultural Development Inventory
ILs	interlanguages
IMRD	Introduction-Method-Results-Discussion
L1	first language
L2	second language
LANs	left-to-bilateral anterior negativities
LANs	local area networks
LCP	Language Contact Profile
LeaP	Learning Prosody in a Foreign Language
LFG	Lexical-functional Grammar
LMT	Lexical Mapping Theory
LOR	length of residence
MCS	memory for contingent speech
MEG	magnetoencephalography
MLAT	Modern Language Aptitude Test
MM	Multidimensional Model
MTM	multiple-trace memory
NHLRC	National Heritage Language Resource Center
NLP	natural language processing
NS	native speaker
NS-NNS	native speaker-non-native speaker
OM	Ontogeny Model
OPI	Oral Proficiency Interview
OT	optimality theory
PDH	Proceduralization Deficit Hypothesis
PET	Positron Emission Tomography
PLAB	Pimsleur's Language Aptitude Battery
PLD	primary linguistic data
P&P	principles and parameters

PSTM	phonological short-term memory
PT	Processability Theory
PWM	phonological working memory
RST	reading span task
SA	study abroad
SES	socio-economic status
SFL	systemic-functional linguistics
SILC	Strategic Inventory for Learning Culture
SILL	Strategic Inventory for Language Learning
SLA	second language acquisition
SLM	Speech Learning Model
SOPI	Simulated Oral Proficiency Interview
TBLT	Task-based Language Teaching
TMS	transcranial magnetic stimulation
TOEFL	Test of English as a Second Language
TOEIC	Test of English for International Communication
UCM	Unified Competition Model
UG	Universal Grammar
US	unconditioned stimulus
VACs	verb-argument constructions
VOT	voice onset time
ZISA	Zweitspracherwerb Italienischer und Spanischer Arbeiter
ZPD	Zone of Proximal Development

Contributor

Rebekha Abbuhl is Assistant Professor of Linguistics at California State University Long Beach. Second language writing, interactionist approaches to second language acquisition, and teacher training are her main research areas.

Kathleen Bardovi-Harlig is Professor of Second Language Studies at Indiana University. Her research focuses on second language acquisition of temporal expression including tense-aspect and narrative development and acquisition of second language pragmatics including the acquisition of sociopragmatic rules, pragmalinguistic resources, and conventional expressions.

Robert Bayley is Professor of Linguistics at the University of California, Davis. He has conducted research on variation in L1 and L2 English, Spanish, and ASL as well as ethnographic research in U.S. Latino communities.

Martha Bigelow is Associate Professor at the University of Minnesota. Her research focuses on the language learning and cultural adaptation of immigrant youth. She is co-author of *Literacy and Second Language Oracy* (2009) and author of *Mogadishu on the Mississippi: Language, Racialized Identity, and Education in a New Land* (2010).

Heidi Byrnes is George M. Roth Distinguished Professor of German at Georgetown University. Her research focuses on the development of advanced L2 literacy. She has addressed that topic in edited and co-edited volumes and papers, most recently in the co-authored monograph *Realizing Advanced Foreign Language Writing Development in Collegiate Education: Curricular Design, Pedagogy, and Assessment*.

Carol Chapelle is Distinguished Professor of Liberal Arts and Sciences at Iowa State University. She is editor of *The Encyclopedia of Applied Linguistics* (Wiley-Blackwell); co-editor of the *Cambridge Applied Linguistics Series*; past President of the American Association for Applied Linguistics (2006–2007); and former editor of *TESOL Quarterly* (1999–2004).

Robert DeKeyser is Professor of Second Language Acquisition at the University of Maryland, College Park. His research interests include age effects in second language learning, individual differences and their interaction with second language teaching methodology, the relationship between implicit and explicit learning, the role of negative feedback, and study abroad.

Kathleen Dillon is Associate Director of the University of California Consortium for Language Learning & Teaching. She has published on topics pertaining to the poetics of Boris Pasternak.

Zoltán Dörnyei is Professor of Psycholinguistics at the School of English Studies, University of Nottingham. He has published widely on various aspects of second language acquisition and is the author of several books, including *The Psychology of Second Language Acquisition* and *Teaching and Researching Motivation* (Second Edition with Ema Ushioda).

Patricia Duff is Professor of Language and Literacy Education at the University of British Columbia, Canada, and Co-Director of the Centre for Research in Chinese Language and Literacy Education. Her recent publications deal primarily with language socialization in linguistically diverse communities and qualitative research methods in applied linguistics.

Fred Eckman is Professor of Linguistics and Chair of the Department of Linguistics at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. His research focuses on second language (L2) acquisition theory, and on the explanation of interphonology and L2 syntax.

Nick Ellis is Research Scientist at the English Language Institute, Professor of Psychology, and Professor of Linguistics at the University of Michigan. His research interests include cognitive psycholinguistic, complex systems, and emergentist aspects of language. He serves as general editor of *Language Learning*.

Susan Gass is University Distinguished Professor in the Department of Linguistics and Germanic, Slavic, Asian and African Languages at Michigan State University where she serves as Director of the English Language Center and Director of the Second Language Studies program. Her research focuses on second language input and interaction. She is co-author of *Second Language Acquisition: An Introductory Course*.

ZhaoHong Han is Professor of Language and Education at Teachers College, Columbia University. Her research interests lie broadly in second language learnability and teachability. Her latest book is *Linguistic Relativity in SLA: Thinking for Speaking* (co-edited with Teresa Cadierno, *Multilingual Matters*).

Debra Hardison is Associate Professor in the TESOL and Second Language Studies programs at Michigan State University. Her research focuses on auditory-visual integration in spoken language processing with an emphasis on second-language speech development. Studies include applications of technology for perception and production training of segmental and prosodic elements.

Trude Heift is Professor of Linguistics in the Department of Linguistics at Simon Fraser University, Canada. Her main research areas are computer-assisted language learning, applied and computational linguistics. She is currently associate editor of *Language Learning & Technology*.

Jörg-U. Keßler is Professor of English and Applied Linguistics at Ludwigsburg University of Education, Germany. He is editor of *Processability Approaches to Second Language Development and Second Language Learning* and co-editor of an introductory textbook on PT. His main research areas are (instructed) second language acquisition, early foreign language learning and immersion & CLIL.

Olga Kagan is Professor in the Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures at UCLA and Director of the National Heritage Language Resource Center. Her research focuses on heritage

language learners. She co-edits the *Heritage Language Journal* and has co-authored eight textbooks in Russian, including two textbooks for heritage language learners.

Keiko Koda is Professor of Second Language Acquisition and Japanese in the Department of Modern Languages at Carnegie Mellon University. Her research focuses on second language reading and biliteracy development. She authored *Insights into Second Language Reading* and edited/ co-edited *Reading and Language Learning* and *Learning to Read across Languages*.

Folkert Kuiken is Professor of Dutch as a Second Language at the University of Amsterdam, where he coordinates the Dual Master of Dutch as a Second Language. His research interests include the effect of task complexity and interaction on SLA, Focus on Form, and the relationship between linguistic complexity and communicative adequacy.

Barbara Lafford is Professor of Spanish in the School of International Letters & Cultures at Arizona State University. She is editor of the Monograph/Focus Issues Series for the *Modern Language Journal*. Her main research areas are second language acquisition in study abroad and classroom environments, applied linguistics, and CALL.

James Lantolf is Greer Professor in Language Acquisition and Applied Linguistics at Penn State University. His research focus is on sociocultural theory and second language acquisition. He co-authored *Sociocultural Theory and the Genesis of Second Language Development* and co-edited *Sociocultural Theory and the Teaching of Second Languages*.

Donna Lardiere is Professor of Linguistics at Georgetown University. She is author of *Ultimate Attainment in Second Language Acquisition: A Case Study* (Taylor & Francis/Routledge). Her research focuses on the role of linguistic theory in second language acquisition, particularly the acquisition of morphology and syntax.

Diane Larsen-Freeman is Professor of Education, Professor of Linguistics, and Research Scientist at the English Language Institute at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. She is also Distinguished Senior Faculty Fellow at the School for International Training in Brattleboro, Vermont. Her areas of interest are second language acquisition, English grammar, language teacher education, and language teaching methodology.

Batia Laufer is Professor of Applied Linguistics at the University of Haifa, Israel. Her research focuses mainly on areas in second language vocabulary acquisition: form-focused instruction, incidental learning, cross-linguistic influence, testing, reading, word difficulty and dictionary use.

Shawn Loewen is Associate Professor in the Second Language Studies program at Michigan State University. His research interests include instructed second language acquisition, corrective feedback, and L2 interaction. He teaches courses on second language acquisition and research methodology.

Alison Mackey is Professor in the Department of Linguistics at Georgetown University and Head of the Applied Linguistics Programs there. Her academic interests include input and interaction, research methodology, and adult and child L2 learning.

Brian MacWhinney is Professor of Psychology at Carnegie Mellon University and has formulated a model of language processing and learning called the Competition Model. He has also developed the

Sally Magnan is Professor of French, Director of the Language Institute, Co-Chair of the Doctoral Program in Second Language Acquisition at the University of Wisconsin, Madison and past editor of the *Modern Language Journal*. Her recent research investigates language learning during study abroad and learner issues with the National Standards for Foreign Language Learning.

Kara Morgan-Short is Assistant Professor in the Departments of Hispanic and Italian Studies and Psychology at the University of Illinois at Chicago. Informed by the fields of linguistics, cognitive psychology and neuroscience, her research aims to elucidate the neurocognitive processes underlying late-learned second language acquisition and use.

I. S. P. Nation is Emeritus Professor of Applied Linguistics in the School of Linguistics and Applied Language Studies at Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand. He has taught in Indonesia, Thailand, the United States, Finland, and Japan. His special interests are language teaching methodology and vocabulary learning.

John Norris is Associate Professor in the Department of Second Language Studies at the University of Hawaii at Manoa. His teaching and research focus on language pedagogy, program evaluation, educational assessment, and research synthesis.

Lourdes Ortega is Professor of Second Language Studies at the University of Hawaii at Manoa. Her research focuses on second language acquisition, L2 writing, foreign language education, and research methods. Her most recent book is *Understanding Second Language Acquisition* (2009, Hodder). She is editor of *Language Learning*.

Lucy Pickering is Associate Professor of Applied Linguistics at Texas A&M-Commerce. Her research explores second language oral discourse, the pedagogical applications of computer-assisted speech analysis, and the ways in which learners develop competence in relation to prosody.

Manfred Pienemann is Professor of Linguistics at Paderborn University, Germany and Visiting Professor at Newcastle University, UK. He was previously Professor of Applied Linguistics at the Australian National University. He founded the Language Acquisition Research Centre at Sydney University and was one of the founding members of PacSLRF. He has been involved in SLA research since the 1970s.

Charlene Polio is Associate Professor at Michigan State University, where she teaches in the TESOL and Second Language Studies programs. Her research interests include second language writing research methods and the relationship between writing and SLA. She is the editor of the *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*.

Peter Robinson is Professor of Linguistics and SLA at Aoyama Gakuin University, Tokyo, Japan. He is editor of the book series, *Cognitive Science and Second Language Acquisition*, published by Routledge, and of the forthcoming *Routledge Encyclopedia of Second Language Acquisition*.

Richard Schmidt is Professor of Second Language Studies and Director of the National Foreign Language Resource Center at the University of Hawaii at Manoa. His research focuses on

psychological and social factors in SLA and issues concerning the teaching and learning of less commonly taught and difficult languages.

Norman Segalowitz is Professor of Psychology at Concordia University in Montréal, Associate Director of the Centre for the Study of Learning and Performance, and author of *The Cognitive Basis of Second Language Fluency* (Routledge, 2010). He studies automatic and attention-based processes in L2 fluency and proficiency and their implications for language instruction.

Peter Skehan is Professor of Applied Linguistics at the University of Auckland. He has taught in the U.K. and Hong Kong. He has published and researched in second language acquisition, particularly foreign language aptitude and task-based performance, assessment, and instruction.

Roumyana Slabakova is Professor of Linguistics and Second Language Acquisition at the University of Iowa. She investigates the acquisition of meaning in its relation to linguistic structure, focusing on temporal, aspectual and nominal meanings, as well as pragmatic implicatures. She is a founding editor of the journal *Linguistic Approaches to Bilingualism*.

Elaine Tarone is Distinguished Teaching Professor of Second Language Studies and Director of the Center for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition (CARLA) at the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities; author of *Literacy and Second Language Oracy, Exploring Learner Language*, and author of publications on interlanguage variation, referential communication and language play.

Pavel Trofimovich is Associate Professor of Applied Linguistics in the Department of Education at Concordia University in Montreal, Canada. His research focuses on cognitive aspects of second language processing, second language phonology, sociolinguistic aspects of second language acquisition, and the teaching of second language pronunciation.

Michael Ullman is Professor in the Departments of Neuroscience, Neurology, Linguistics and Psychology at Georgetown University. His research examines the brain bases of first and second language, how language and memory are affected in various disorders, and how factors such as sex and genetic variability affect the neurocognition of language.

Emma Ushioda is Associate Professor in ELT and Applied Linguistics at the Centre for Applied Linguistics, University of Warwick. Her main research interests are language learning motivation, learner autonomy, sociocultural theory and teacher development.

Bill VanPatten is Professor of Spanish and Second Language Studies at Michigan State University. His research has focused on morphological representation, input processing, language processing more generally, and instructed second language acquisition.

Ineke Vedder is Senior Researcher and Head of Education at the University of Amsterdam. Her research interests include instructed SLA, particularly Italian as a second language, the influence of task complexity and interaction on L2 performance, and the relationship between linguistic complexity and communicative adequacy in L2 writing.

Jill Watson is Lecturer in French at Cornell University in the Department of Romance Studies. She has done research in a range of foreign language and English as a second language settings with a focus on refugee adolescents who are becoming literate for the first time. She applies her work

language teacher development and school reform initiatives.

Jessica Williams is Professor of Linguistics at the University of Illinois at Chicago. She has published on a variety of topics, including second language writing, lexical acquisition, and the effect of focus on form. Her books include *Teaching Writing in Second and Foreign Language Classrooms* and *Theories in Second Language Acquisition* (edited with Bill VanPatten).

John Williams is Reader in Applied Psycholinguistics at the University of Cambridge, UK. His research focuses on the cognitive mechanisms of second language learning, and second language lexical and syntactic processing.

Introduction

Susan M. Gass and Alison Macken

Learning a second or foreign language is commonplace in today's world. In fact, recent estimates (Grosjean, 2010) suggest that more than half of the world's population knows more than one language. Some of this dual language knowledge comes from family or societal sources, that is, growing up in a dual-language family or a bi- or multilingual society; in other instances, second language knowledge comes from an instructional setting. In some instances, learning begins post-puberty; in other instances, it begins in childhood. Despite these varied facts, we are still a long way from understanding how second languages are learned, why many individuals have difficulty in reaching high levels of proficiency in a second language, or even what the best pedagogical approach might be. This *Handbook of Second Language Acquisition* provides comprehensive coverage of the field of second language acquisition (SLA) with an effort to incorporate a wide range of different approaches to understanding how languages are learned.

As an ever-growing body of research on SLA has indicated, numerous factors are involved in L2 learning (de Bot *et al.*, 2005; Gass and Selinker, 2008; Ortega, 2009; Mitchell and Myles, 1998). Put another way, the field of SLA is multi-faceted and interdisciplinary, a fact which also reflects the complexity of L2 development. The many factors involved in L2 learning (e.g., linguistic, psychological, sociological) are generally best viewed in combination. In other words, the highly complex phenomenon of second language learning can only be understood when all parts of the picture can be seen at the same time. A single approach (e.g., focusing only on linguistic aspects of learning, or focusing only on social aspects of learning) is too simplistic and is unlikely to move us toward our goal of understanding the entire phenomenon and, in particular, why and when language learning is successful, and why and when it is not.

This *Handbook* is designed to provide a state-of-the-art survey of L2 research exploring theoretical issues of particular significance in L2 learning and teaching. The *Handbook* is intended for SLA researchers, applied linguists, graduate students, upper-level undergraduate students, practitioners, and other professionals related to or interested in SLA. Accordingly, the topics discussed in the *Handbook* were selected in consideration of the needs of the intended audience. More importantly, the selections were also made based on the degree of significance and prominence to which each topic has contributed to L2 research. Some topics have already received book-length treatises (e.g., approaches related to sociocultural theories); other topics (e.g., issues related to heritage learners, study abroad, education level) have not typically been included in an overall discussion of language learning prior to this *Handbook*.

Even though the primary scope of the *Handbook* is second language learning, authors were also asked to provide a section on how their approaches to learning a second language might be applied in an instructional context. We designed the *Handbook* this way because of our conviction that while these two disciplines (language teaching and language learning) are separate and each has its own

research history and trajectories, there is, nonetheless, common ground and a need for strong cross-fertilization. Theories about learning are often tested in the classroom and understanding of classroom language and behavior can often feed into our theoretical notions. Below is a synopsis of the instructions provided to authors of the chapters in this volume concerning the structure of the chapters. To represent each area, we intentionally selected leading scholars and they, in turn, often selected rising stars as co-authors.

(1) Historical discussion

This section places the chapter in historical perspective and provides the reader with a sense of where the topic fits within the field as a whole, and how (when appropriate) it relates to other disciplines.

(2) Core issues in the area

This section presents and explains the major tenets of the topic and provides the reader with commentary on the most up-to-date findings.

(3) Data and common elicitation measures

In this section, authors describe what types of data are used, how these data are typically gathered and how they are analyzed.

(4) Applications/instructional relevance

As discussed above, in the hope of bridging the divide between theory and practice, in this section, the authors discuss the impact that their approach has for instruction.

(5) Future directions

In the final section, authors point to the future of their approach and speculate where they see this area of research going both in the short and the longer term.

Quite clearly, this outline better suits some approaches better than others, but all authors were guided by this general outline. The book is divided into seven parts: (1) Language in context, (2) Linguistic perspectives—form and meaning, (3) Psycholinguistic and neurolinguistics perspectives, (4) Skills learning, (5) Individual differences, (6) The setting for learning and (7) Assessing learner knowledge.

The first section discusses how language use in context affects second language (L2) learning, dealing with three issues that have led to debates among researchers: the interactionist approach (including feedback), variationist perspectives, sociocultural theory, and complexity theory. This first section illustrates the dynamics involved in learning and emphasizes the need to understand the role that the context plays in learning. A particular focus is on how the context impacts learning and how learners take advantage of the opportunities that the context provides to further their learning.

In the second section, linguistic theories in SLA are presented, along with evidence for and/or against relevant theories from research to date. In this section, there is an emphasis on language form (phonology and syntax), meaning and meaning-making (semantics, vocabulary, pragmatics), as opposed to language use, as was the case in some of the chapters in the first section.

The third section takes the reader to the area of language processing. All of the chapters in this section consider psycholinguistic and neurolinguistic accounts of L2 learning processes. Each of the chapters draws heavily on the field of psycholinguistics, cognitive psychology, or neurolinguistics. We do not intend the reader to infer that other chapters do not draw on these fields (e.g., speech perception); the organization was simply a heuristic for determining the main focus of chapters.

In the fourth section, we include chapters about L2 learning across the four traditional language skill areas: reading, writing, speech production, and speech perception, drawing attention to relevant

research that elucidates how L2 learners can develop those skills and how they can benefit from particular (instructional) techniques designed to help improve the four skills. This section concludes with a comparison of spoken and written language production.

The fifth section reflects the fact that in SLA it has long been recognized that individuals vary in terms of how they learn, as well as their ultimate abilities in a second language. What is less clear is how to account for these differences. This section presents research on some of the proposed causes. The chapters in this section address a wide range of issues that may impact learning, some of which are commonly accepted (e.g., aptitude and motivation) and others which will provoke the reader to think about individual differences in a slightly different way (e.g., education level, home language, cultural background [language of one's heritage]).

In the sixth section, the focus is on the ways in which different settings affect L2 learning: studying abroad, second language vs. foreign language environments, and language learning through technology. Each of these areas is important not only for our understanding of how languages are learned, but is also crucial to teachers, curriculum developers, and policy setters as they find footing in their decisions about numerous instances related to how to have a cutting-edge language program.

Last but not the least, in its final section, the *Handbook* brings to our attention the validity and reliability of various measures designed to assess L2 knowledge. We opened this introduction with an estimate of how much of the world's population is bilingual. There is no definitive answer for a variety of reasons, one of which is our inability to know how to make precise measurements. However, it is crucial to have a firm foundation in assessment, not only to measure pedagogical successes, also to measure SLA which is even more germane to the issues discussed in this book. In other words, in order to conduct sound SLA research, it is essential that we know how to measure knowledge and have a keen understanding of what it means to know a second language. The final chapter moves us in this direction.

In sum, this collection surveys the field of SLA with an eye on the history, the current practice, the applications, and the future, with an attempt to consider as many relevant factors as possible as we move toward an understanding of how, when, and where second languages are learned.

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