

## On the Role of SLA in Teaching and Learning

**Three** decades have passed since the publication of Leslie Beebe's edited volume *Issues in Second Language Acquisition*. As she deftly pointed out back then, it was a big job to summarize a whole field of research. I have to admit that her statement rang true for this issue, too. A lot has happened in SLA over these 30 years: Many subfields have emerged, and views on SLA have significantly expanded and diversified. Thus, I would like to borrow the words of Beebe again and say in my Editorial Note that no single publication such as ours can do full justice to the developments and complexities of the current practice of SLA. We tried to be as inclusive as possible by offering many different strands of interest as topics for submission. The current issue represents a small number of the total submissions we finally settled on publishing after much deliberation and multiple reviews. However, they do represent current trends and interests, and we hope our readers will find them both informative and useful. There is a fair amount of valuable application that can be drawn from this issue, and—we also hope—a substantial amount of food for thought. The following paragraphs summarize the key aspects of each contribution.

Chesla Lenkaitis delves into the use of videoconferencing as a tool for both second language acquisition and learner autonomy development. Her Feature Article, a mixed-methods study, examines the benefits of a virtual partnership between teacher candidates in the United States and EFL students at a post-secondary institution in Colombia. She demonstrates that the English language learners increased both their engagement with the more interactive aspects of language acquisition and their learner agency as they self-analyzed aspects of their language development. Through such innovative virtual exchanges between teacher candidates and EFL students, Lenkaitis argues, opportunities abound for second language acquisition in particular and learner development in general.

In their Feature Article on learning opportunities for English learners in the mathematics classroom, Haiwen Chu and Leslie Hamburger review three popular K–12 mathematics curricula used in the United States, to determine whether and how such curricula provide occasions for English learners to engage in rich mathematical talk with their peers. Drawing on the foundational work of task schema introduced by Rod Ellis, they adapt this framework for analyzing the communicative opportunities afforded to English learners to this content area. The authors provide a nuanced critique of the curricula by reporting the results of research centered on a sorting task for eighth-grade students. They conclude by considering ways in which educators might maximize English learners' second language development during mathematics instruction.

In a Brief Report on the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) Model, Timothy Hall reviews some of the tenets and features of SIOP and critically evaluates them from an implementation standpoint based on current understanding of second language acquisition. Hall argues that SIOP has inherent limitations in the extent to which it can meet the needs of English learners, and that administrators and teachers who choose to implement SIOP need to be familiar with such limitations. They also need to develop their own research-based understanding of second language acquisition to increase opportunities for ELs.

In the newly added column Alternative Perspectives, Kelsey Swift engages the issues of SLA research past, present, and future. Although mainstream SLA research continues to uphold the efficacy of grammatical instruction, critical approaches have begun to question pedagogical strategies that rely on traditional notions of language and language learning. The tension that exists between these approaches is then unpacked by Swift's critical examination of two influential reviews of the state of the field. She argues that past work on grammatical instruction is rooted in hegemonic conceptions of language that limit the two works' applicability to real-life adult immigrant students and potentially perpetuate inequality. In this way, Swift offers an alternative to the more common approach to SLA.

In the Materials Review section, Peter Kim reviews a book on SLA aspects of language learning, including the role that the mind plays, the influence of various grammars, and transitioning between languages. Kim recommends the book as a comprehensive discussion of the major theories of language acquisition,

particularly for the teacher with some experience in the field. Then, Marisol Marcin reviews the online social network game Township as a tool for language learning in the K–12 classroom. In this game the player, in the role of governor, creates a town through farming and then building factories and infrastructure, thus providing exposure to a variety of social studies content and vocabulary. It is available in multiple languages, and encourages students to participate in collaborative quests that develop language use and engagement over time.

In the Readers' Comments and Views section, Ji-Yung Jung, Farah Akbar, and Jordan Gonzales bring back a topic published in one of our first issues: reviving the discussion in Kendon Kurzer's article "Metacognition in the Common Core State Standards." The authors point to the importance of metacognitive instruction in second language acquisition, extending the scope of Kurzer's review of the literature to include five main variables that address learner-internal and learner-external processes. As metacognitive instruction has the potential to play a central role in second language learners' language acquisition, especially for adult learners, the discussion helps teachers keep up to date with current theories that can directly affect classroom practice.

With this variety of articles, we hope to encourage more SLA engagement both in research and practice across educational settings. Particularly, we'd like to call for a closer examination of the interface of SLA and some of the more recently favored classroom pedagogies. We also invite our readers to send in their comments and views on this issue. We would very much like to hear from the practicing teachers across K-16.

In closing, special thanks go to all the reviewers for this issue, and to the Editorial Team, who worked very hard to meet the deadlines.

*Lubie G. Alatraste*  
*New York City, July 2019*

